DAVID A. COOK

A History of Narrative Film

FIFTH EDITION





A HISTORY OF NARRATIVE FILM

FIFTH EDITION

David A. Cook

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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For Diane, always

And for our children,
Lindsay, Gregory, and Jessica

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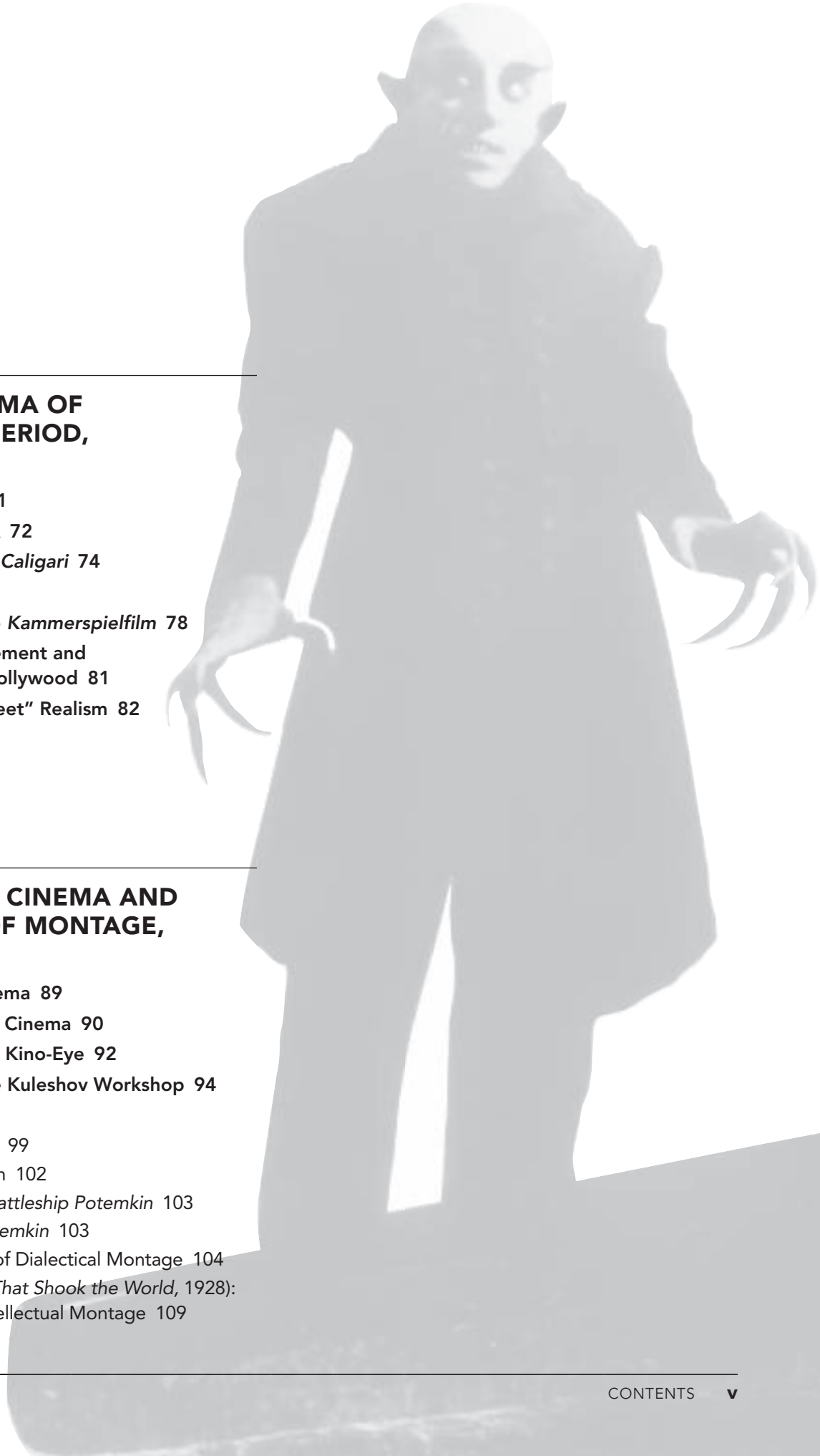
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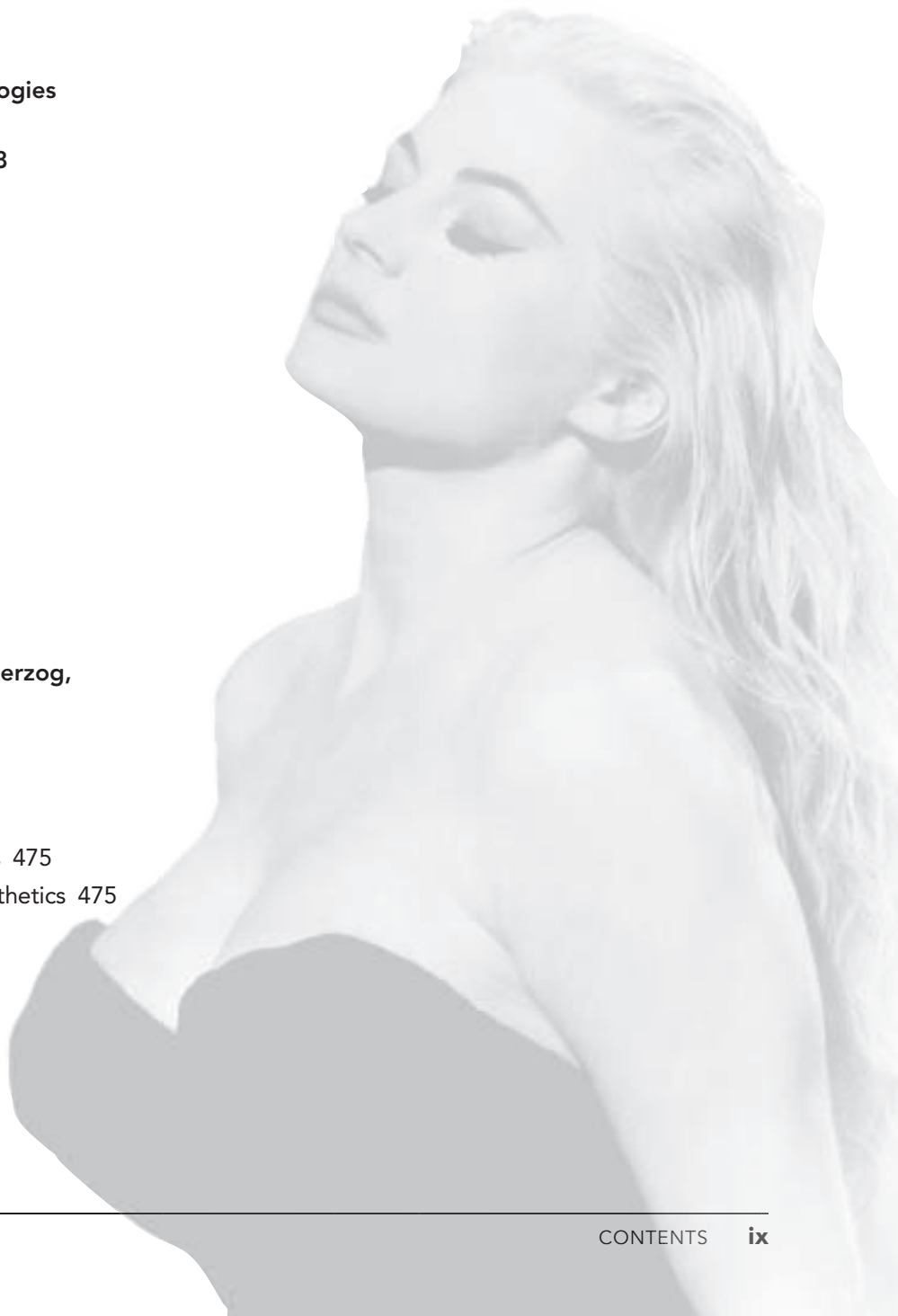
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Preface

We spend much of our waking lives surrounded by moving photographic images. They have come to occupy such a central position in our experience that it is unusual to pass even a single day without encountering them for an extended period of time, through either film or television. In short, moving photographic images have become part of the total environment of modern industrial society and, both materially and psychologically, have a shaping impact on our lives. Yet few of us have been taught to understand precisely how they work. Most of us, in fact, have extremely vague notions about how moving images are formed, and how they are structured to create the multitude of messages sent out to us by the audiovisual media on an almost continuous basis. If we made an analogy with verbal language, we would be forced to consider ourselves barely literate—able to assimilate the language form without fully comprehending it. We would, of course, be appalled to find ourselves living in a culture with a verbal literacy level of a three-year-old child. Most persons living with such limitations, like small children, would be easy prey to whoever could manipulate the language. They would be subject to the control of any entity that understood the language from the inside out and could therefore establish an authority of knowledge over them, just as verbally literate adults establish authority over children. Such a situation would be unthinkable in the modern industrial world, and our own culture has made it a priority to educate its children in the institutions of human speech, so that they can participate in the community of knowledge that verbal literacy sustains.

Imagine that a new language form came into being at the turn of the twentieth century—an audiovisual language form that first took the shape of cinema and then became, in time, the common currency of modern television. Imagine that because making statements in this language depends on an expensive industrial process, only a handful of elite specialists are trained to use it. Imagine that, although there was public anxiety about the potentially corrupting influence of the new language at its birth, it was *perceived* not as a language at all but as a medium of popular entertainment, and in this guise, the language has gradually colonized us as if it were the vernacular speech of some conquering foreign power. Finally, imagine waking up one day to discover that we had mistaken the language for a mode of dreaming, and in the process have become massively illiterate in what has turned into the primary language form, one that not only surrounds us materially but that, as language forms tend to do, also invades our minds. What would we do if that happened? We could choose to embrace our error and lapse into the anarchic mode of consciousness characteristic of preliterate societies, which might be fun but most certainly would be dangerous in an advanced industrial society. Or, we could attempt to instruct ourselves in the language form from ground up and from inside out. We could try to learn as much of its history, technology, and aesthetics as possible. We could trace the evolution of its syntactic and semantic forms from its birth through its present stages of development, and try to forecast the shapes it might take in the future. We could, finally, bring the apparatus of sequential logic and critical analysis to bear on the seemingly random

structures of the language in order to read them in new and meaningful ways.

This scenario conforms quite accurately, I believe, to our present situation in the modern world. The language of the moving photographic images has become so pervasive in our daily lives that we scarcely notice its presence. And yet, it *does* surround us, sending us messages, taking positions, making statements, and constantly redefining our relationship to material reality. We can choose to live in ignorance of its operations and be manipulated by those who control it. Or, we can teach ourselves to read it, appreciate its very real and manifold truths, and recognize its equally real and manifold deceptions. As a lifelong student and teacher of language forms, both verbal and audiovisual, I believe that most intelligent and humane persons in our culture will opt for the latter. It is for them that I have written this book.

Preface to the Fifth Edition

In the past decade, two trends have become abundantly clear—the persistence of blockbuster megapictures (or "tent poles") that dominate the global market, and the renewed vitality of independent films, some of them art films. The advent of low-cost, high-end digital film equipment at the consumer level has meant that indie producers are no longer dependent on the technical resources of the majors. By the 2010s, thousands of small companies could produce films for a fraction of the cost of a Hollywood product. Postproduction was also rendered inexpensive by nonlinear editing software available for home computers. By 2005, about 15 percent of the U.S. domestic box office derived from independent films.

In response to the digitization of production, distribution, and exhibition in the West, digital video increasingly became the medium of choice in the developing world. Recent developments in the cinemas of Nigeria, Turkey, Tunisia, and Romania testify to the increasing globalization of film beyond Hollywood's force-feeding megapicture machine. This has been possible to a large extent because the technology of high-definition (HD) video has put the tools of classical Hollywood cinema into the hands of the world's have-nots and disempowered, or at least those less powerful than America's multinational media conglomerates.

At the same time, American control of the world's mass media has never been stronger. The American film industry in the early twenty-first century has become a crucible for the creation of franchises and brands that achieved nearly universal diffusion through the majors' global distribution network. As film historian Stephen Prince puts it, "Understood in strict economic terms, production by the majors [is] about the manufacture and distribution of commodities (not films) on a national and global scale." Appropriately, the cover image of this edition is from Jean-Luc Godard's 1996 film *Made in U.S.A.*, which, in perfect irony, could not be shown in the United States until 2009 due to a threatened suit for copyright infringement.

Moreover, by the mid-2010s, the United States had the great advantage of sustaining the largest home market for motion pictures in the world: with more than 40,000 screens, an all-time high, American audiences accounted for 44 percent of the global box office in 2014. This domestic market, saturated as it was, provided studios with an opportunity to amortize a film's highest costs (those incurred in production) in the United States, and then derive pure profit from foreign and ancillary markets.

Also by the mid-2010s, both mainstream and independent films had to grapple with the new economic and financial force of television. Increasingly, the vast majority of films that opened at the Sundance Film Festival and its counterparts found their audience not in a theater but on a video-on-demand system. This has meant a partial reconfiguration of film form toward the streaming nature of video.

Changes in the Fifth Edition

To improve the reader's experience, the long lists of films in the previous editions have been moved to an extensive Filmography section online, which can be found at digital.wwnorton.com/narrativefilm5. Also moved online is the Selective Bibliography, while the lengthy footnotes that sometimes cluttered the text

have been deleted. Users of the Fifth Edition's Ebook can find both the Filmography and the Selective Bibliography inside, after the Glossary. The design of the book has been similarly altered to provide fewer but bigger and bolder illustrations, now presented in a four-color format.

A section on new Romanian cinema has been added to Chapter 16, as well as a section on digital 3-D to Chapter 21; information on various national cinemas has been updated through 2015; and finally, a new chapter (Chapter 22) has been added to address major developments since 2004, including the institutionalization of the megapicture, the rise of independent production and distribution, and the influence of video on both "slow cinema" and "long movies" (the frequently binge-watched formulations of serial television known as miniseries). Chapter 22 deals with new developments in the cinema of Nigeria, Turkey (including new material on Nuri Bilge Ceylan), and Thailand (including new material on Apichatpong Weerasethakul), as well as the rise and fall of "torture porn" and the advent of new auteurs in Hollywood—especially those specializing in dramatic comedy, or "dramedy," such as David O. Russell, Spike Jonze, Alexander Payne, Wes Anderson, Richard Linklater, and Paul Thomas Anderson; and others, such as David Fincher, Steven Soderbergh, Joel and Ethan Cohen, and Christopher Nolan. Special attention also is paid to the work of Kathryn Bigelow, Sofia Coppola, Spike Lee, and Steve McQueen.

While it is clear that Hollywood megapictures will continue to dominate the world's theater screens, it is equally clear that motion pictures are no longer primarily consumed on theatrical screens. Mobile, online, and streaming consumption of motion pictures is increasingly common and tends to liberate the cinema from the blockbuster syndrome in the direction of independence. But the more things change, the more they stay the same: cinema is still fundamentally a narrative art whose major purpose is the telling of stories, and storytelling precedes every other form of organized human behavior but the burial of the dead. Its roots lie deep in our consciousness and preconsciousness, and its importance to us will not go away easily. So as the screens grow smaller, the importance of cinema looms ever larger, telling stories of valor and heroism, war and peace, and love and loss, as it always has done and will continue to do until narrative loses its fundamental place in our hierarchy of values.

On Method

For reasons that will become apparent in the course of this book, I believe that the history of film as we have experienced it to date is the history of a narrative form. Many of the greatest films ever made were created by artists seeking to break the constraints of this form as it is defined at different points in time, and there is much evidence to suggest that since the 1960s, cinema has been moving in an increasingly nonnarrative direction. But the fact remains, the language common to the international cinema from the last decade of the nineteenth century to the present has been narrative, both in aspiration and structural forms. For this reason, I have excluded documentary cinema, animated cinema, and the experimental avant-garde from consideration in this book, except when they have influenced narrative form to a demonstrable and significant degree. This is not to suggest that any of these forms is unimportant, but rather that each is important and distinctive enough to warrant a separate history of its own (many of which, in fact, already exist).

On Dates, Titles, and Illustrations

Wherever possible, the date given for a film is the year of its theatrical release in its country of origin. Unless otherwise noted (as in the case of intermittent production or delayed release), the reader may assume a lapse of four to six months between the start of production and the date of release for features. This is important in correlating the history of film with the history of human events—for instance, many American films with the release date of 1942 went into production and were completed before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

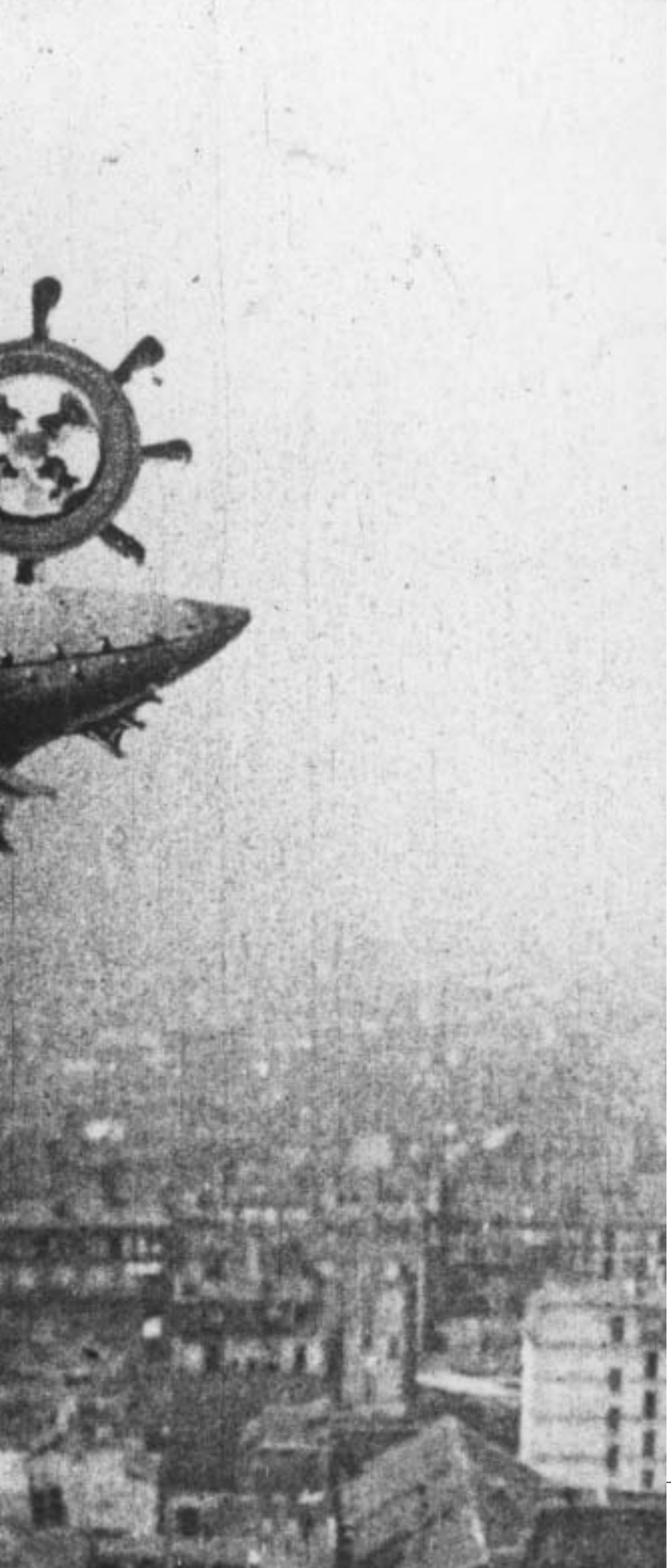
As for the titles of films in languages other than English, those in French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and German are given in the original language, followed (in parentheses) by a literal English translation, and an alternate English-language release title, if one exists. After the initial reference, the original foreign-language title is used, except in the case of a film that is best known in the English-speaking world by its English title—for example, Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle*, 1959). For Scandinavian, Eastern European, Middle Eastern, Asian, and African

languages, the convention is reversed: the initial reference is given in English, followed by the original title in parentheses (a transliteration is supplied if the original title is in an alphabet other than our own). All subsequent references use the English title, unless the film is best known by its foreign-language title—for instance, Akira Kurosawa's *Ikiru* (*Living/To Live*, 1952) and *Yojimbo* (*The Bodyguard*, 1961). In the case of films for which the original foreign-language title is unavailable, only the English title is given.

The photographs used to illustrate the book represent a combination of production stills and DVD frame grabs. Production stills, since they are taken on the set by professional photographers, yield a higher quality of reproduction; but since they are made initially for the purpose of publicity, they are sometimes "beautified" to the point of distortion. Frame grabs, on the other hand, are taken digitally from the films themselves and, therefore, represent the actual images as composed and shot by the filmmakers. Their quality of reproduction is often lower than that of production stills, since several extra steps of transference are involved in printing them, but their correspondence with the film images is exact. I have tried to use frame grabs whenever shot sequences have been reproduced for discussion or when lengthy analysis accompanies an individual image or series of images. I have used production stills when less analytical procedures are involved. (Many films of the 1950s and most films of subsequent eras were shot in some type of widescreen process, with aspect ratios varying from 2.55:1 to 1.85:1. For reasons of typography and design, a few of the stills from such films in this volume have been reproduced in the 1.33:1 aspect ratio of the Academy frame.) Although photographs can never replicate cinema, lacking as they do the essential component of motion, they can be made to represent it. Throughout the book, I have attempted to integrate the stills with the written text in a manner that provides for maximum delivery of information. The reader is, therefore, encouraged to regard both photographic and verbal information as part of the same critical fabric, although neither, ultimately, can substitute for the audiovisual information contained in the films themselves.



A la conquête de l'air (*Conquest of the Skies*; Ferdinand Zecca, 1901).



01

Origins

Optical Principles

The beginning of film history is the end of something else: the successive stages of technological development during the nineteenth century, whereby simple optical devices used for entertainment grew into sophisticated machines that could convincingly represent empirical reality in motion. Both toys and machines depended on interactive optical phenomena known as **persistence of vision** and the **phi phenomenon** for their illusions. The former is a characteristic of human perception, known to the ancient Egyptians but first described scientifically by Peter Mark Roget in 1824, whereby the brain retains images cast on the retina of the eye for approximately one-twentieth to one-fifth of a second beyond their actual removal from the field of vision. The latter, whose operation was discovered by the Gestalt psychologist Max Wertheimer in 1912, is the phenomenon that causes us to see the individual blades of a rotating fan as a unitary circular form or the different hues of a spinning color wheel as a single homogeneous color.

Together, persistence of vision and the phi phenomenon allow us to see a succession of static images as a single unbroken movement and permit the illusion of continuous motion on which **cinematography** is based. Persistence of vision prevents us from seeing the dark spaces between the film frames by causing "flicker fusion," when the frequency with which the projection light is broken approaches fifty times per second. Without this effect, our eyes would perceive the alternation of light and dark on the

screen as each projected image succeeded the next, as in fact was the case in the earliest days of the movies. Films became known colloquially as "flickers" or "flicks" for this very reason. The phi phenomenon, also known as the "stroboscopic effect," creates apparent movement from frame to frame at optimal projection speeds of 12 to 24 frames per second (fps). This much is known, but perceptual psychologists still understand very little about the neural and cognitive processes involved in the perception of motion.

The **frames** of a strip of film are a series of individual still photographs that the motion-picture camera, as it was perfected by the Edison Laboratories in 1892 and as it exists today, imprints one at a time. The succession of frames recorded in the camera, when projected at the same or a similar speed, creates the illusion of continuous motion essential to the cinema. Most motion-picture cameras today expose individual frames at the rate of 24 per second. The illusion of continuous motion can be induced in our brains at rates as low as 12 fps, yet speeds have traditionally been set at about 16 fps for silent film and 24 for sound.

On the film strip itself, these frames are separated by thin, unexposed frame lines, but in projection a rotating **shutter** opens and closes to obscure the intervals between frames and to permit each frame to be flashed on the **screen** twice, thereby eliminating the flicker we would otherwise perceive by their movement. When we "watch" a film in a theater, we actually spend as much as 50 percent of the time in darkness, with the projector's shutter closed and nothing before us on the screen, whether the film is digitized or not. Thus, the continuity of movement and light that seems to be the most palpable quality of the cinema exists only in our brains.

Persistence of vision and the phi phenomenon were exploited for the purpose of optical entertainment for many years before the invention of photography. A popular child's toy of the early nineteenth century was the Thaumatrope (from the Greek for "magical turning"), a paper disk with strings attached at opposite points on the perimeter so that it could be twirled between finger and thumb. A different image was imprinted on each face, and when the disk was spun the images seemed to merge into a single unified picture (a rider would mount a horse, a parrot enter its cage, and so on).

Between 1832 and 1850, hundreds of optical toys were manufactured that used rotating "phase drawings" of things in motion to produce a crude form of animation. Drawings representing successive phases of an action would be mounted on a disk or a cylinder and rotated in conjunction with some type of shutter apparatus (usually a series of slots in the disk or the cylinder itself) to produce the illusion of motion. Joseph Plateau's Phenakistoscope (from the Greek for "deceitful view," 1832) and George Horner's Zoetrope ("live turning," 1834) were among the most popular of these toys, which reached increasing stages of refinement as the century progressed.



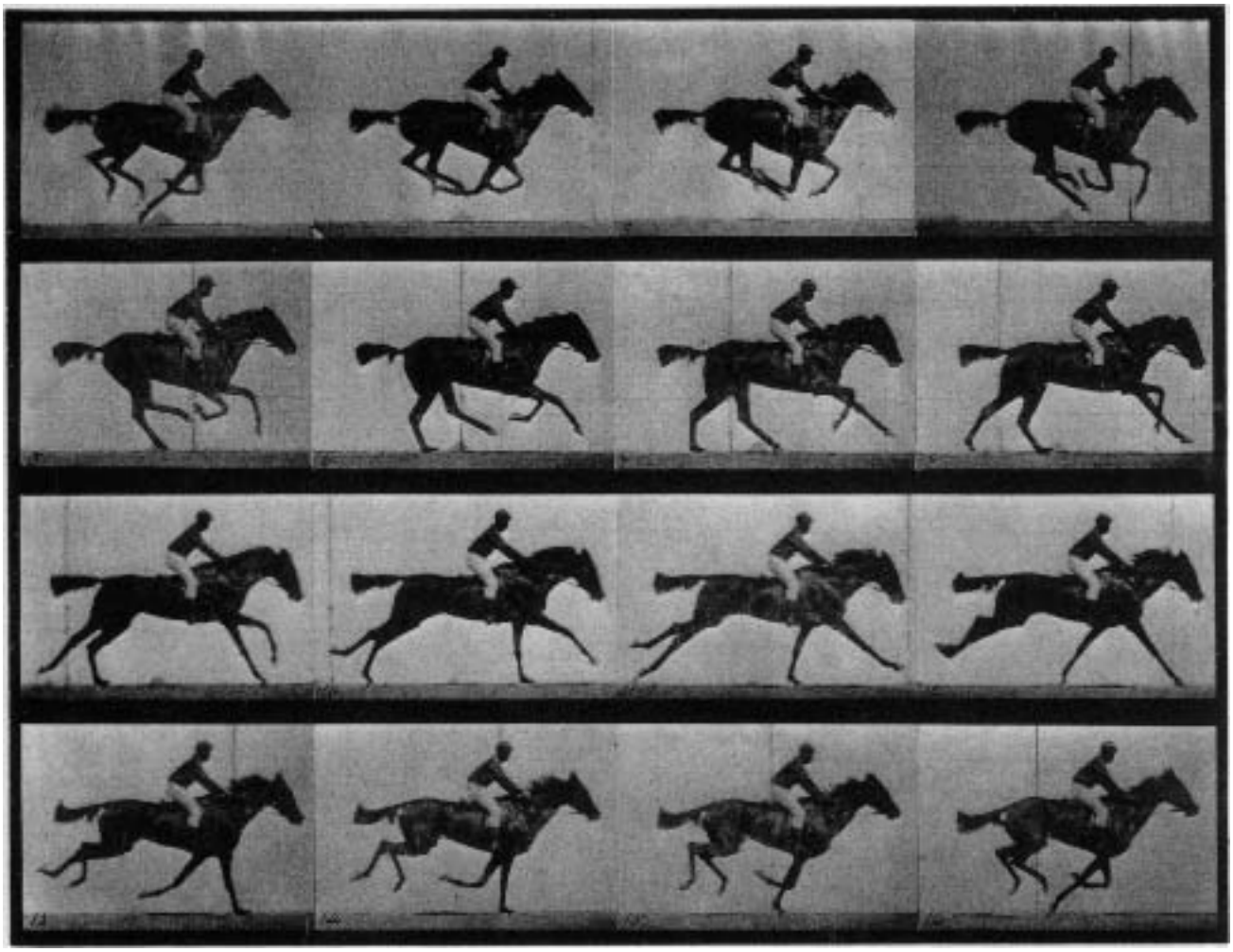
George Horner's Zoetrope.

When still photography was invented by Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787–1851) in 1839 and perfected during the next decade, it was a relatively simple step to replace the phase drawings in the motion-simulation devices with individually posed "phase photographs," as Plateau began to do in 1849. At this point, live action could be *simulated photographically* but not *recorded spontaneously and simultaneously as it occurred*. This required the drastic reduction in photographic **exposure** time from fifteen minutes to one one-thousandth of a second that was achieved between 1876 and 1881 by the replacement of collodion wet plates with gelatin dry plates and by the introduction of "series photography" by the Anglo-American photographer Eadweard Muybridge (1830–1904).

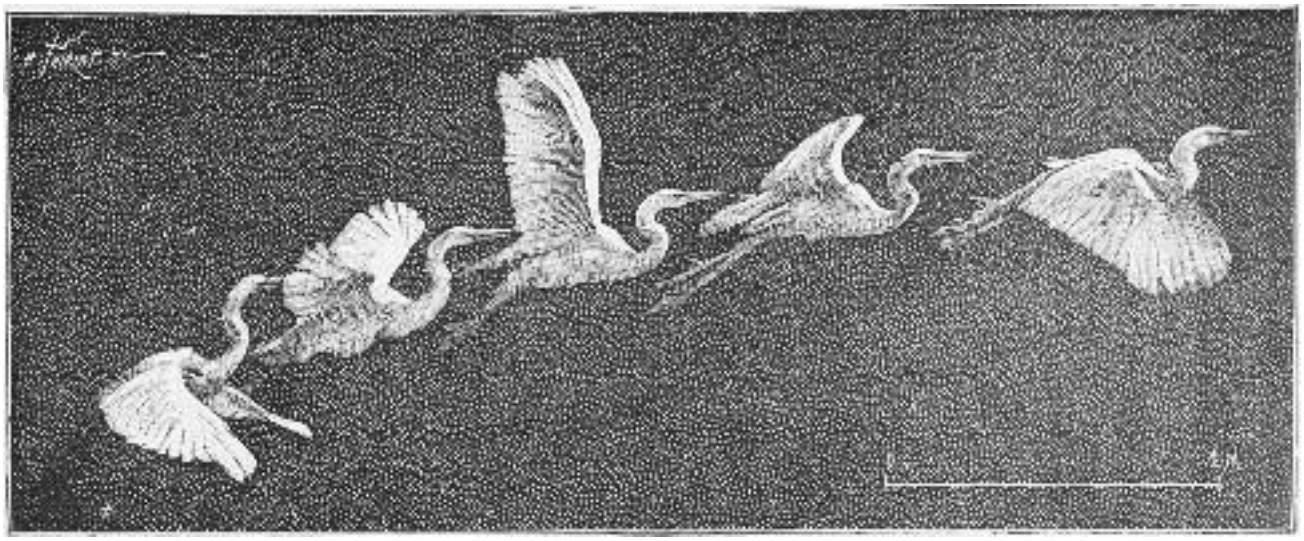
Series Photography

In 1872, Muybridge was hired by Leland Stanford (1824–1893), a former California governor and wealthy businessman, to prove that at some point in its gallop, a racehorse lifts all four hooves off the ground (a convention of nineteenth-century graphic illustration required running horses to always be pictured with at least one foot on the ground). After several years of abortive experiments, Muybridge accomplished this in the summer of 1877 by setting up a battery of twelve electrically operated cameras (later studies used twenty-four) along a Sacramento racetrack and stretching wires across it that would trip the cameras' shutters. As a horse came down the track, its hooves tripped each shutter individually and caused the cameras to photograph it in successive stages of motion during the gallop.

Muybridge demonstrated his results in 1879 on a mechanism he called the zoopraxiscope. This special kind of "magic lantern" projected colored, hand-drawn images that were based on these photographs and placed along the outer rim of a circular glass disk. (The optical, or magic, lantern was a simple projection device invented in the seventeenth century, consisting of a light source and a magnifying lens; it enjoyed great popularity as a projector of still transparencies during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and became a major component in subsequent motion-picture projection.) Muybridge devoted the rest of his life to refining his process of series photography, but he was not "the man who invented moving pictures," as a recent biography proclaims. He recorded live action continuously for the first time in history, but he did so with a series of twelve or more cameras. Until the separate functions of these machines could be incorporated into a single instrument, the cinema could not be born.



Eadweard Muybridge's glass-plate series photographs.



"The Flight of a Heron": images from Étienne-Jules Marey's chronophotographic gun.



Emulsion images from Thomas Edison's "Record of a Sneeze" (or "Fred Ott's Sneeze"; 1894).

It was the French physiologist Étienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904) who recorded the first series photographs of live action in a single camera, which, as it happens, was also portable. Marey, a specialist in animal locomotion, invented the "chronophotographic gun" in 1882 to take series pictures of birds in flight. This instrument, a camera shaped like a rifle, took twelve instantaneous photographs of a movement per second and imprinted them on a rotating glass plate. A year later, Marey switched from the cumbersome plates to paper roll film, which had the effect of introducing the film strip to cinematography.

Yet like most of his contemporaries, Marey was not interested in cinematography as such. In his view, he had invented a machine for the dissection of motion similar to Muybridge's apparatus, but more flexible, and never intended to project his results. The next step was taken in 1887 in Newark, New Jersey, when an Episcopalian minister named Hannibal Goodwin (1822–1900) first used celluloid roll film as a base for light-sensitive **emulsions**.

Goodwin's idea was appropriated by the American entrepreneur George Eastman (1854–1932), who in 1889 began to mass-produce and market celluloid roll film on what would soon become an international scale. Neither Goodwin nor Eastman was initially interested in motion pictures, but it was the introduction of a *plastic* recording medium (in the generic sense of both durable and flexible), coupled with the technical breakthroughs of Muybridge and Marey, that enabled the Edison Laboratories in West Orange, New Jersey, to invent the **Kinetograph**, the first true motion-picture camera.

Motion Pictures

Like his predecessors, Thomas Alva Edison (1847–1931) was not interested in cinematography in and of itself. Rather, he wished to provide a visual accompaniment for his vastly successful phonograph, and in June 1889, he assigned a young laboratory assistant named William Kennedy Laurie Dickson (1860–1935) to help him develop a motion-picture camera for that purpose. Edison, in fact, envisioned a kind of "coin-operated entertainment machine," in which motion pictures made by the Kinetograph would illustrate the sound from the phonograph.

Dickson "invented" the first motion-picture camera in a brilliant synthesis of already existing principles and techniques that he had learned from studying the work of Muybridge, Marey, and others. After some ineffectual attempts to record photographic images microscopically on phonographlike cylinders, Dickson began to experiment with the use of celluloid roll film in a battery-driven camera similar to Marey's chronophotographic gun, and he arrived at the Kinetograph in late 1891. The machine incorporated what have come to be recognized as the two essentials of motion-picture camera and projector engineering: (1) a stop-motion device to ensure the intermittent but regular motion of the film strip through the camera, and (2) a perforated celluloid film strip consisting of four **sprocket** holes on the bottom edge of each frame. The former, adapted by Dickson from the escapement mechanism of a watch, permits the unexposed film strip, in its rapid transit through the camera, to be stopped for a fraction of a second before the lens while the shutter opens to *admit* light from the photographed object and expose the individual frames.

In projection, the process is exactly reversed: each frame, now developed, is held intermittently before the projection lamp while the shutter opens to *emit* light through the lens and project the film image onto the screen. Without a stop-motion device in both camera and projector, the film image would blur. The **synchronization** of film strip and shutter (which ensures the exact regularity of this discontinuous movement) and the synchronization of the camera and the projector are accomplished by means of the regular perforations in the film strip—inspired by the perforated paper of the Edison automatic telegraph—which is pulled through both machines by a system of clawed gears.



Frames from *Rescued by Rover* (Cecil Hepworth, 1905), illustrating sprocket holes.

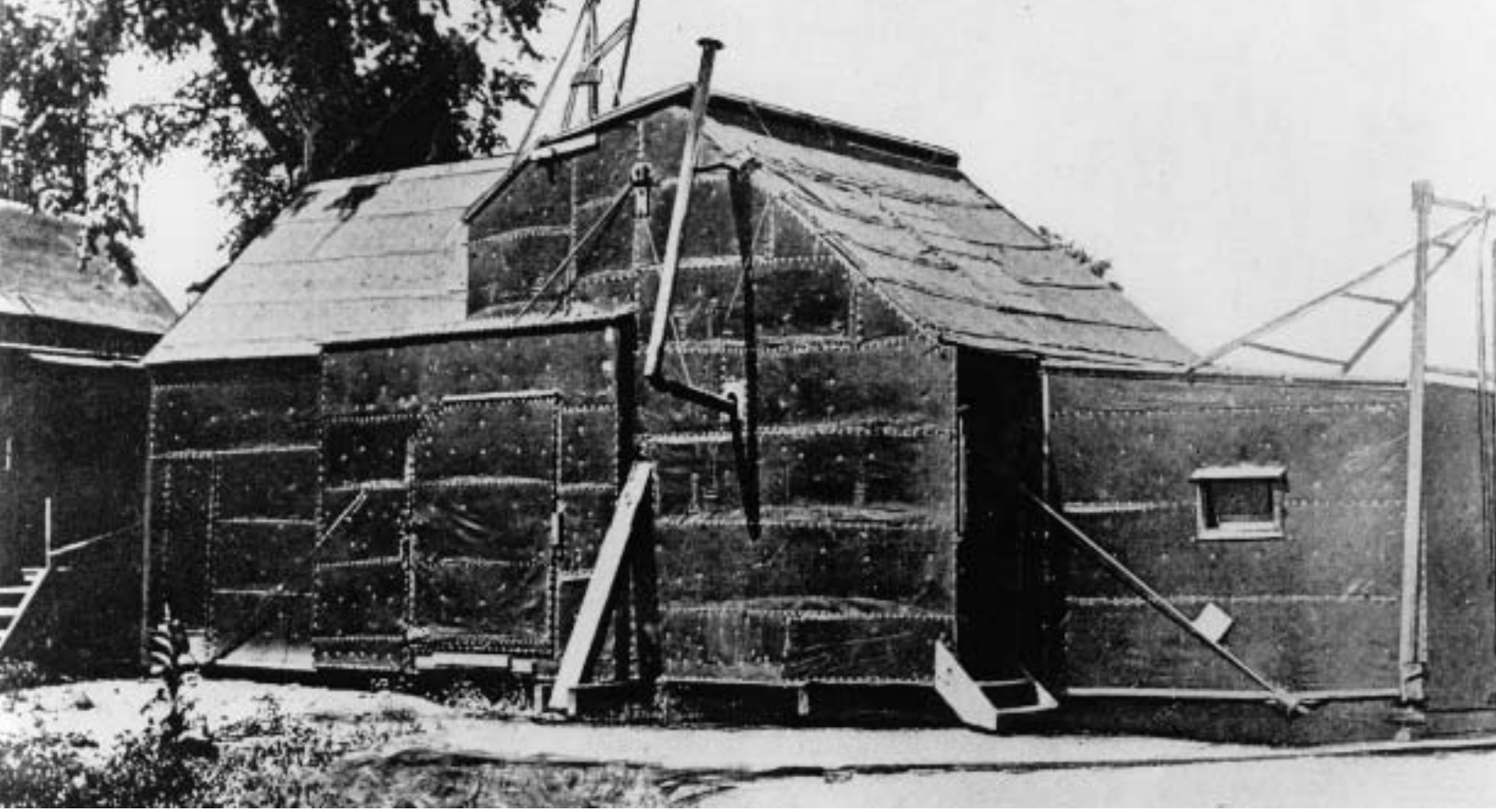
Yet Edison was not interested in projection. He mistakenly believed that the future of moving pictures lay in individual exhibition, so he commissioned Dickson to perfect the small viewing machine he had already designed for private use in the laboratory. The first moving pictures recorded in the Kinetograph were viewed by the public individually through the magnifying lens of a boxlike peep-show machine, in which a continuous 40- to 50-foot film loop ran on spools between an electric lamp and a shutter. This device was dubbed the **Kinetoscope**. True to Edison's original intention, Dickson had attempted to design both viewer and camera so that sound and image could be synchronized and recorded simultaneously. Yet, in fact, accurate synchronization proved impossible, and the very few Kinetoscope films made with sound (called "Kinetophones") employed asynchronous musical accompaniment. Furthermore, when speculative emphasis shifted to projection a few years later, the reproduction of sound became doubly infeasible because there was as yet no means of amplifying it for a large audience.

Edison applied for patents on his new machines in 1891 but decided against paying the extra $150 to secure an international copyright, realizing that the Europeans had done so much of the essential mechanical invention of the apparatus that patent claims against them would not hold up. Soon after patents were granted in 1893, Edison began to market Kinetoscopes through several companies. On April 14, 1894, a Canadian entrepreneur named Andrew Holland opened the first Kinetoscope parlor in a converted shoe store at 1155 Broadway in New York City. Holland charged twenty-five cents per person for access to a row of five Edison peep-show viewers, each of which contained a single film loop shot with the Kinetograph. Others followed his lead, and soon Kinetoscope parlors were opened across the country, all supplied with 50-foot shorts produced for them exclusively by the Edison Company's West Orange studio at the rate of $10 to $15 outright per print.

This first motion-picture studio had been constructed by Dickson in 1893 for a little more than $600. Called the "Black Maria" (after contemporary slang for what was later known as a "paddy wagon") because it was covered with protective tar-paper strips, Dickson's studio was a single room measuring about 25 by 30 feet. A section of its roof could be opened to admit



Thomas Edison's Kinetoscope.



William Kennedy Laurie Dickson's studio "Black Maria" (c. 1893).

the sunlight—then the cinema's only effective lighting source—and the whole building could be rotated on a circular track to follow the sun's course across the sky. Here, from 1893 to April 1895, Dickson was the producer, director, and cameraman for hundreds of brief films distributed by the Edison Company to the Kinetoscope parlors.

These first films seem extremely primitive today, in both content and form. The 50-foot maximum format (approximately 16 seconds at a speed of 40 fps; 60 seconds at the later standard rate of 16 fps) was not conducive to the construction of narratives but was eminently suitable for recording quick vaudeville turns, **slapstick** comedy skits, and other kinds of brief performance. Taken together, the earliest Kinetoscope shorts preserve a series of standard theatrical routines whose only requisite content is motion. Structurally, the films are even cruder, consisting of continuous unedited footage of what occurred in front of the lens of Dickson's stationary camera. This stasis was partly the result of technological limitations—especially the small enclosure of the Black Maria studio and the cumbersomeness of the Kinetograph, which resembled a small icebox in shape and size and initially weighed more than 500 pounds. At this point in the history of film, the camera was never permitted to record more than could be seen by a single individual standing in one fixed spot and focusing on a single event for a given length of time.

Projection: Europe and America

Eadweard Muybridge's well-publicized presentations of his zoopraxiscope (in both Europe and America) during the 1880s did much to stimulate interest in perfecting the projection of a series of photographs. The basic requirements of projection engineering were (1) the enlargement of the images for simultaneous viewing by large groups and (2) a means of ensuring the regular but intermittent motion of the developed film strip as it passed between the projection lamp and the shutter (which would correspond with the discontinuous movement of the strip through the camera). The first requirement was easily and rapidly met by applying the principle of magic-lantern projection to film; the second proved more difficult, but was eventually fulfilled by the Maltese-cross system used in most projectors today.

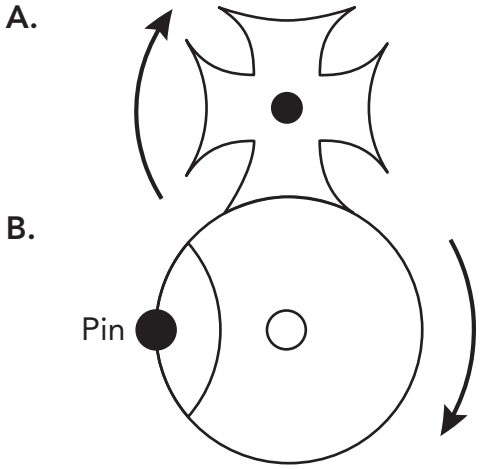


Diagram of the Maltese-cross gear.

The Maltese-cross system was perfected by the German film pioneer Oskar Messter (1866–1943). As indicated by the diagram, it has two basic parts: (A) a gear in the shape of a Maltese cross connected directly to the sprocket wheels that pull the film through the projector, and (B) a circular disk attached to the projector's drive mechanism, which carries a metal pin at its outer edge. The disk rotates continuously, and the pin is located so that it enters one slot of the cross per cycle and propels it through a quarter of a revolution, but when the disk makes contact again with the edge of the cross itself, the gear is tightly locked until the pin rotates around to the next slot. This ensures the regular stop-and-go motion of the film strip through the projector.

It was actually the year 1895 that witnessed the most significant developments in projection technology, and these occurred almost simultaneously in every country in Western Europe and in the United States. By far the most important of these devices was perfected by two brothers, Auguste and Louis Lumière (1862–1954 and 1864–1948, respectively), who operated a factory for the manufacture of photographic equipment in Lyons, France—and whose family name was, appropriately, the French word for "light." After a thorough study of the workings of the Edison machine, the Lumières invented an apparatus that could serve as camera, projector, and film printer and that was finally patented as the **Cinématographe**, thus coining the term that attaches to the medium of film to this day. The Cinématographe was built to run at a speed of 16 fps and established the standard for silent film.

On December 28, 1895, the Lumières rented a basement room in the Grand Café, on the Boulevard des Capucines in Paris, to project a program of ten films for the first time to a paying audience. Some of the titles from that program were *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (*Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station*), which dramatically marked the beginning of the cinema's long obsession with the Industrial Revolution; *Déjeuner de bébé* (*Baby's Lunch*), Louis's record of brother Auguste feeding his infant daughter; and *L'arroseur arrosé* (*The Sprinkler Sprinkled*), a bit of slapstick in which a young boy steps on a hose, which then squirts a gardener in the face when he peers at the nozzle. *L'arrivée* was a visual tour de force, and audiences are said to have dodged aside at the sight of the locomotive barreling toward them into the foreground on the screen.

Due to its relative lightness, the Cinématographe could be taken out of doors more easily than the Kinetograph, and for this reason the early Lumière films have a much higher **documentary** content than do Edison's (the Lumières called their films "*actualités*," or documentary views). Structurally, however, the earliest Lumière and Edison films are precisely the same—the camera and the point of view are static (except when moved functionally, to reframe action) and the action continuous from beginning to end, as if editing "reality" was unthinkable to their makers.

Admission to the Lumière program was 1 franc per customer, and the receipts for the first day totaled only 35 francs. Yet within a month, the Cinématographe showings were earning an average of 7,000 francs a week, and motion pictures had become, overnight, an extremely lucrative commercial enterprise. The most important aspect of the Cinématographe projections, however, was that they marked the end of the period of technological experimentation that had begun with Muybridge's series photography in 1877: the two machines on which the cinema was founded had been perfected at last.

In Germany, the Skladanowsky brothers, Max and Emil (1863–1939 and 1859–1945, respectively), developed almost simultaneously with the Lumières a projector for celluloid film strips called the "Bioskop" or Bioscope (a common term for many early cameras and projectors) and projected films of their own making in a public performance at the Berlin Wintergarten on November 1, 1895. Projection reached England immediately thereafter, in 1896, when a manufacturer of scientific instruments named Robert W. Paul (1869–1943) patented the Theatrograph (later renamed the Animatograph), a projector based on the Kinetoscope—although the Lumière Cinématographe was soon to capture both the British and the Continental markets.

(right) Auguste and Louis Lumière.





L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat (*Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station*; Lumière brothers, 1895).

Edison became aware of the vastly promising financial future of projection through the success of the Cinématographe at about the same time that Kinetoscope installations had reached a saturation point in the United States (all told, a little more than 900 of them were sold), and he commissioned the invention of a projection device in the summer of 1895. In September of that year, however, Edison learned that two aspiring inventors, C. Francis Jenkins (1867–1934) and Thomas Armat (1866–1948), had projected a program of Kinetograph shorts at the Cotton States Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia, with an electrically powered machine that incorporated a stop-motion mechanism superior to anything then under patent. Their projector also made use of a small but extremely important device employed earlier in the year by the Latham family (brothers Gray and Otway, along with their father, Woodville). The Lathams, who had made money showing fight films with Edison's Kinetoscope, formed the Lambda Company to make motion pictures of prize fights and other sporting events and then project these on the screen. Their contribution, the **Latham loop**, merits special consideration here.

One chief practical problem of early motion-picture production and exhibition was that of film breakage. At lengths greater than 50 to 100 feet, the inertia of the take-up reel would frequently cause the film strip to tear or snap in the projector. Assisted by the engineer-inventors Enoch Rector and Eugène Augustin Lauste, the Lathams had discovered that by placing a small loop in the film strip just above and below the projection lens and maintaining it with an extra set of sprockets, the stress could be redistributed in such a manner as to permit films of greater length in the magazine. Edison was so impressed with the features of Armat's machine that he abandoned his own research project and bought the apparatus outright under a scandalous agreement whereby he himself would manufacture it and take full credit for its invention, while Armat would be allowed a small plate on the back crediting him with "design."

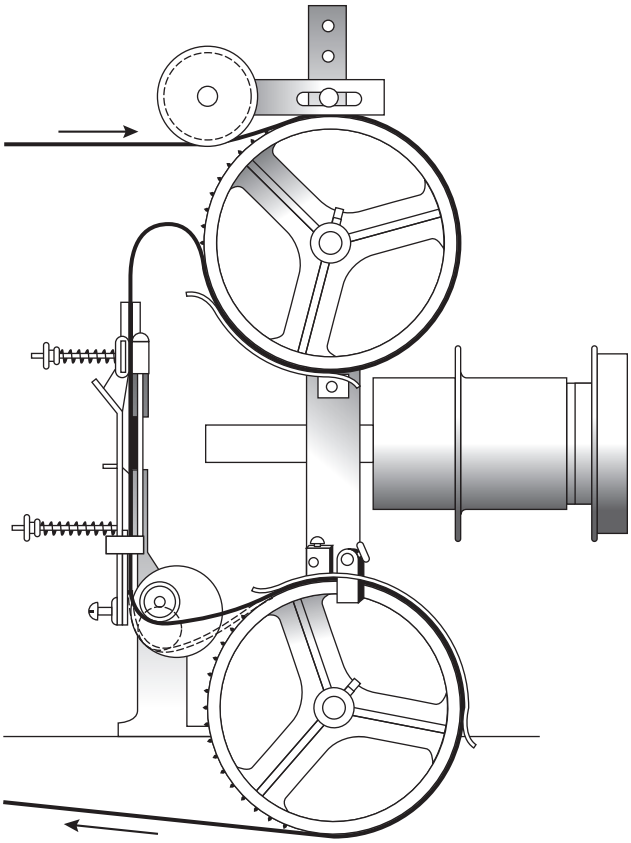
Edison dubbed the new machine the Vitascope and gave it its first public exhibition on April 23, 1896, at the popular Koster and Bial's Music Hall in New York City, where it received top billing as "Edison's greatest marvel." Like their predecessors, Edison's Vitascope films offered nothing more than unmediated glimpses of real action as it unfolded before the camera from a single point of view, but these rather crude "living pictures," as they were soon labeled, proved novel and engaging enough to satisfy the public's taste for several years to come. After all, the world had never seen their like before.

For example, a writer for *La Poste* commented on the Cinématographe projections of December 28, 1895:

> The beauty of the invention resides in the novelty and ingenuity of the apparatus. When these apparatuses are made available to the public, everybody will be able to photograph those who are dear to them, no longer as static forms but with their movements, their actions, their familiar gestures, capturing the speech on their very lips. Then, death will no longer be absolute.

The original audiences for motion pictures did not perceive them as we do—as a succession of images linked together in a continuity of meaning—but rather as a series of discontinuous "animated photographs." Conditioned by lantern slide shows, comic strips, and other serial presentations of images, these audiences saw individual scenes as self-contained and did not infer meaning from one scene to the next. The shift in consciousness from films as animated photographs to films as continuous narratives began around the turn of the century.

The Vitascope and Cinématographe projections mark the culmination of the cinema's prehistory. By 1896, all of the basic technological principles of film recording and projection had been discovered and incorporated into existing machines—which, with certain obvious exceptions, such as the introduction of light-sensitive sound, have remained essentially unchanged from that day to this. Thus, the history of cinema as an art form begins, for if our understanding of the machines was sophisticated, knowledge of how to use them was primitive indeed. Nevertheless, by the late 1890s, cinema was already on its way toward becoming a mass medium with the then-unimaginable power to communicate without print or speech.



The Latham loop, redrawn from Thomas Armat's 1901 patent application.

The Evolution of Narrative: Georges Méliès

During the 1890s, near the end of the decade, exhibitors often created multishot narratives that focused on such subjects as a fire rescue or the Spanish-American War. The showmen developed these stories by purchasing various one-shot films from production companies, then putting them in an order and delivering a narration, often combined with **sound effects** and lantern slides. Creative responsibility was thus divided between producer and exhibitor. By the turn of the century, however, producers were beginning to assume this editorial responsibility by making multishot films on their own. In the process, filmmakers took more control of the narrative, allowing for greater specificity in the story line. In many respects, therefore, producers began to resemble modern-day filmmakers.

Such a development is most clearly apparent in the work of Georges Méliès (1861–1938), a professional magician who owned and operated the Théâtre Robert-Houdin in Paris. Méliès had been using magic-lantern projections in his conjuring acts for years, and when he attended the first Cinématographe programs in 1895, he immediately recognized the vast illusionist possibilities of the "living pictures." Accordingly, in early 1896, he bought an Animatograph projector from the English inventor Robert W. Paul for 1,000 francs and simply reversed its mechanical principle to design his own camera, which was constructed for him by the instrument maker Lucien Korsten. By April 1896, Méliès was showing his own productions in his own theater. In time, he would become the cinema's first important narrative artist as well, but not before he had done some apprentice work in the manner of the Lumières and Edison by filming a series of *actualités*, comic episodes, and staged conjurer's tricks for projection in his theater.

According to Méliès's memoirs, one afternoon in the fall of 1896, while he was filming a Parisian street scene, his camera jammed in the process of recording an omnibus as it emerged from a tunnel. When he got the machine working again, a funeral hearse had replaced the omnibus, so that in projection the omnibus seemed to change into the hearse. By this accident, Méliès came to recognize the possibilities of manipulating real time and real space inherent in the editing of exposed film.

Although he went on to make hundreds of delightful **narrative films**, his model for them was the narrative mode of the legitimate theater, because it was what he knew best. That is, he conceived all of his films in terms of dramatic **scenes** played out from beginning to end, rather than in terms of **shots**, or individual visual perspectives on a scene. The only editing, therefore, aside from that used in optical illusions of disappearance and conversion, occurs *between* scenes, rather than *within* them. The scenes themselves are composed of single shots, taken with a motionless camera from a fixed point of view, that of a theater spectator sitting in the orchestra center aisle with an excellent eye-level view of the action, and the actors move across the film frame from left to right or right to left as if it were the proscenium arch of a stage. Normally, a viewer experiences no more narrative manipulation within a Méliès film than in watching a stage play of the same action; one sees a significant amount of stage illusion, of course, but changes in time and space coincide precisely with changes in scene, and the narrative point of view is rigidly static.

Méliès was nevertheless the cinema's first narrative artist. By adapting certain techniques of still photography, theater spectacle, and magic-lantern projection to the linear medium of the film strip, he innovated significant narrative devices such as the **fade-in**; the **fade-out**; the overlapping, or **"lap," dissolve**; and **stop-motion photography**.

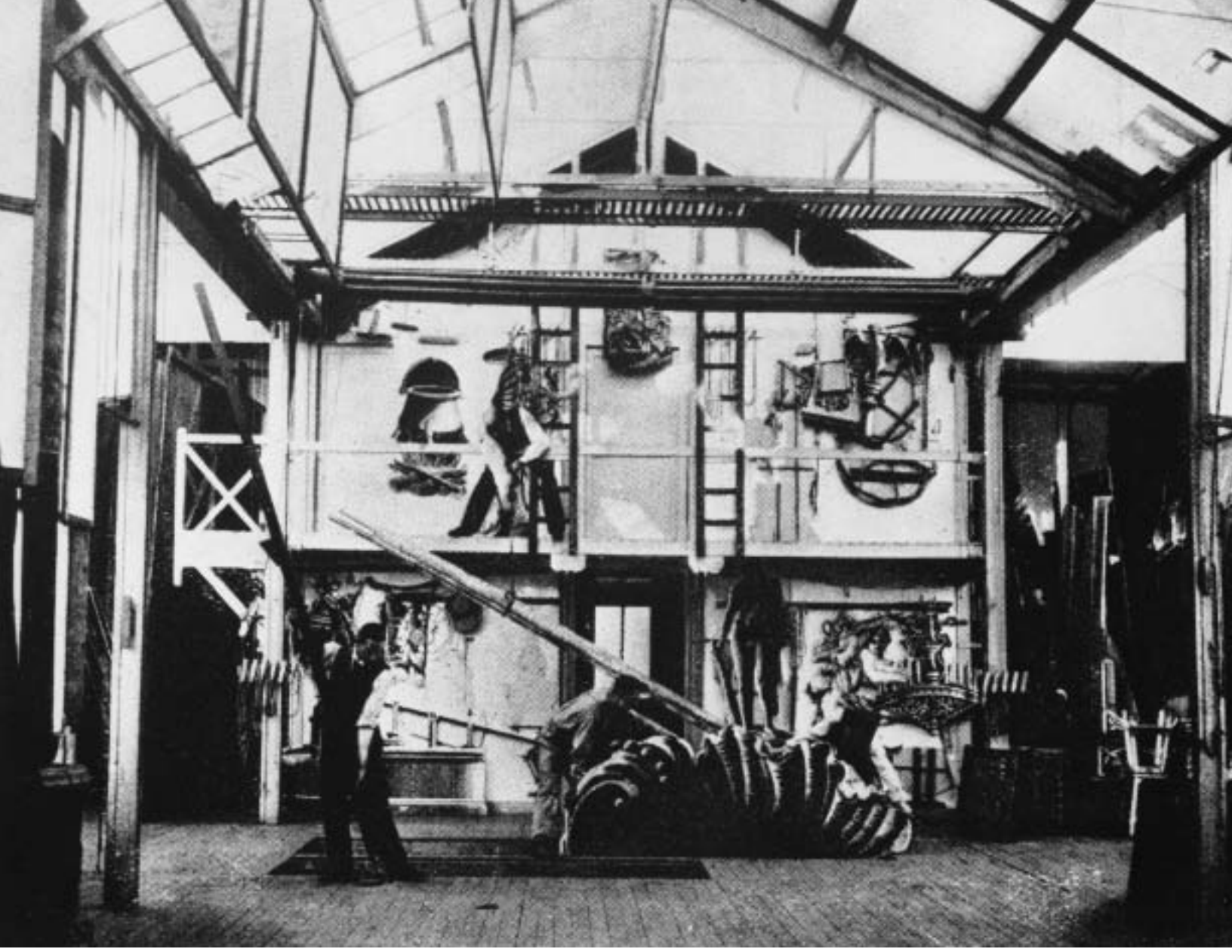
To put his discoveries into effect, Méliès, in late 1896, organized the Star Film Company, and by the spring of 1897, he had constructed a small production studio on the grounds of his house in the Paris suburb of Montreuil. The building measured 55 by 20 feet and was glass-enclosed like a greenhouse to admit maximum sunlight, the cinema's only effective lighting source until mercury-vapor lamps came into general use around 1907. Here Méliès produced, directed, photographed, and acted in some five hundred films between 1897 and 1913, when, like so many other film pioneers, he was forced out of business by his competitors because he had lost touch with the rapid development of both the medium and the industry.

His early work consisted of short "trick films," by and large, whose impact depended on a single special effect, usually accomplished through photographic double exposure or superimposition. Soon longer films, approximately one reel in length, began to appear—for example, *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) and *The Palace of the Arabian Night*s (1905)—and by mid-decade Méliès was fully committed to narrative until the end of his career.

Although he also made many films based on historical and contemporary events, Méliès's most memorable productions concern the fantastic and the bizarre and are acted out before lush phantasmagoric backgrounds that he himself designed and painted. Many were released in color, because at the height of his very substantial success Méliès employed twenty-one women at the studio of Madame Tuillier to hand-tint his films individually, frame by frame. Although Méliès went bankrupt in 1923, due to his ruin at the hands of Pathé Frères and other rivals, his films had immense popular appeal at the turn of the century. Indeed, by 1902, Star Film had become one of the world's largest suppliers of motion pictures, with offices in New York, London, Barcelona, and Berlin, and had nearly driven the Lumières out of production.

By far the most successful and influential film Méliès made at Montreuil was *Le voyage dans la lune* (*A Trip to the Moon*). Produced in 1902, this film achieved international circulation within months of its completion, albeit through the unethical distribution of "dupes" by rival concerns as much as through Méliès's own sales. *Le voyage dans la lune*, loosely adapted by Méliès from the Jules Verne novel of the same title, was 825 feet long (a little under 14 minutes at the average silent speed of 16 fps), or three times the average length of the contemporary Edison and Lumière products (one of Méliès's achievements was increasing the standard length of fiction films). Utterly characteristic of both the strengths and the weaknesses of Méliès's theatrical narrative mode, the film is composed of thirty separate scenes, which he appropriately called **"tableaux**," all photographed from the same angle and connected by means of lap dissolves.

The whole film very much resembles a photographed stage play, save for the inclusion of some of the optical tricks that were a Méliès trademark—the product of nineteenth-century stage illusion, pure and simple—and that serve to illustrate how very far Méliès really was from tapping the full narrative potential of the medium. The classic example of Méliès's lack of

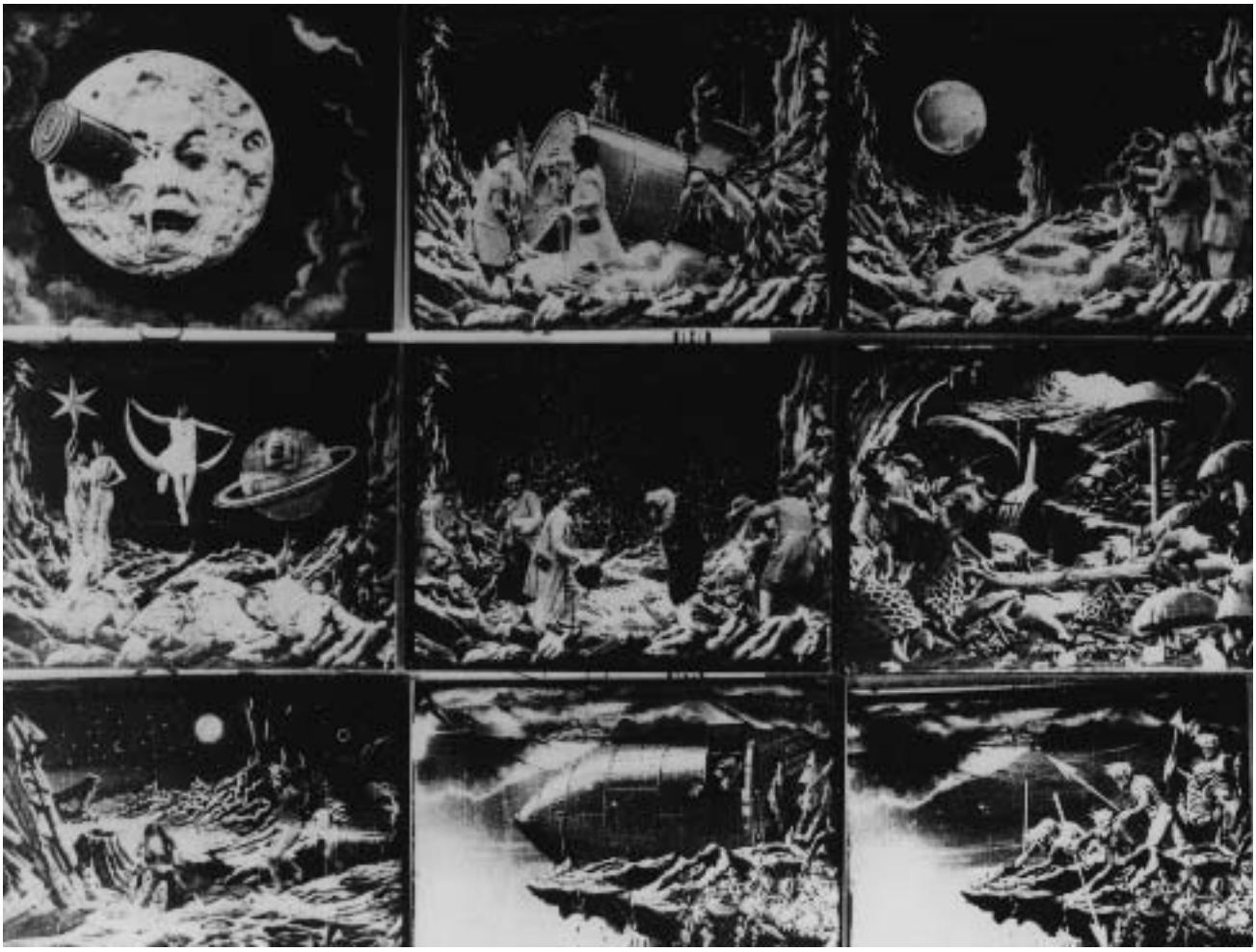


Interior of Georges Méliès's studio at Montreuil.

vision in this respect is that when he wished to show the astronomers' projectile crashing dramatically into the face of the moon, he moved the papier-mâché moon on a dolly into the lens of the camera, rather than moving the camera into the moon—even though, as a practical matter, moving the camera would have been far simpler. Méliès, in fact, never moved his camera once in any of his more than five hundred films. Neither did he alternate the point of view within scenes or even between them by changing camera angles. His films were, as he once called them, "artificially arranged scenes," or "moving tableaux," and his camera functioned as the inert eye of a theater spectator from the beginning to the end of his career.

Viewed today, these early films are bound to seem primitive because cinema is for us a highly integrated narrative form. (In fact, *primitive cinema* is the term used by film historians—not in a pejorative sense—to describe the medium from the invention of its first machines to about 1910.) There is an increasing body of opinion, however, that their original audiences experienced these films very differently than we do—as a kind of performative spectacle, or "attraction," whose function was to *present*, rather than to represent, to *show*, rather than to narrate.

Film scholar Tom Gunning has called this phenomenon the "cinema of attractions" and suggests that it dominated the medium's first decade (1895–1906), after which the story film became dominant and the presentational mode went underground to become an important element of avant-garde cinema and certain narrative genres (e.g., the musical, science



Frames from *Le voyage dans la lune* (*A Trip to the Moon*; Georges Méliès, 1902).

fiction). In its earliest form, the cinema of attractions drew audiences to the technological display of its projection apparatus (the Vitascope was "Edison's greatest marvel," and so on) and, on-screen, solicited their attention by "direct address"—that is, the recurring look of the actors at the camera—or some other form of direct stimulation.

In this view, to look for narrative continuity in such early films—even such clearly plotted ones as *Le voyage dans la lune*—is to miss the point that for filmmakers and audiences alike, early cinema was conceived as a series of displays providing spectatorial pleasure through all of the objects, views, and events it could show, whether fictional or documentary and whether in story form or not. This perspective has the distinct advantage of refusing to blame early cinema for what it was not—a stuttered and inarticulate version of what cinema would become during its so-called classical period, from the 1910s through the 1950s, or what we regard as its even more advanced state today.

Méliès discovered, if he did not exploit, the enormous potential inherent in the editing of exposed film, and through his influence on contemporary filmmakers he pointed the cinema well on its way toward becoming an essentially narrative, rather than a documentary, medium, as Edison and Lumière cameramen had originally conceived it. Furthermore, Méliès was an artist of unique and individual talent, and his films endure every bit as much for their distinctive imaginative power as for their contributions to cinematic form. He had stumbled into the narrative dimensions of the cinema very much as cinema had stumbled into being—arbitrarily, almost by accident—and he appropriated a conventional and unimaginative narrative model because it was what he knew best; yet those who came after him would understand. Charlie Chaplin called him "the alchemist of light," but D. W. Griffith, at the end of his own monumental career in 1932, put it best when he said of Méliès, "I owe him everything."

Edwin S. Porter: Developing a Concept of Continuity Editing

Méliès ultimately lost his audience to the practitioners of a more sophisticated narrative style, the origins of which are closely associated with the work of Edwin S. Porter (1870–1941). Porter had worked as a Vitascope projectionist in 1896, helping to set up the landmark Koster and Bial's projection of April 23, and he subsequently operated his own equipment in such mainline theaters as the Eden Musée in New York City. In 1900, Porter joined the Edison Manufacturing Company as a mechanic and, in early 1901, he became production head of its new skylight studio on East Twenty-First Street, where for the next few years he served as director/cameraman for much of the company's output. His first films were one-shot skits and *actualités* and brief multiscene narratives based on political cartoons and contemporary events. Porter also filmed the extraordinary *Pan-American Exposition by Night* (1901), which used **time-lapse photography** to create a circular panorama of the illuminated fairgrounds, by modifying his camera to expose a single frame every ten seconds.

By 1901, Porter had encountered the films of Méliès and those of the two British pioneers, George Albert Smith (1864–1959) and James Williamson (1855–1933). Smith, a portrait photographer, and Williamson, a lanternist, had constructed their own motion-picture cameras and, between 1896 and 1898, had begun to produce trick films featuring superimpositions and interpolated **close-ups** (*Grandma's Reading Glass* [Smith, 1900]; *The Big Swallow* [Williamson, 1901]). Smith would later develop the first commercially successful photographic color process (Kinemacolor, c. 1906–1908, with Charles Urban), while Williamson apparently experimented with intercutting between the interior and the exterior of a building as early as 1901 in *Fire!*—a film that decisively influenced the structure and content of Porter's *Life of an American Fireman* (1903). By 1902, both Smith and Williamson had built studios in their native Brighton and, with their associates, came to be known as members of the "Brighton school," although they did not really constitute the coherent movement that such a term implies.

Yet it seems certain that Porter saw some of the earlier Brighton work, because it was occasionally sold by Edison, and also he may have seen that of the Yorkshire-based filmmakers James Bamforth (*The Kiss in the Tunnel*, 1899), who produced films with the Riley brothers of Bradford under the banner of RAB (Riley and Bamforth), and Frank Mottershaw of the Sheffield Photo Company (*A Daring Daylight Robbery*, 1903). However, it may have been Porter's experience as a projectionist at the Eden Musée in the late 1890s that led him to the practice of continuity editing in the period from 1901 to 1903. As he moved from exhibition to production, Porter began to apply many of the editorial skills he had learned to filmmaking. He was also clearly influenced by Méliès's story films. Thus, *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1902) shows a strong debt to Méliès's *Bluebeard* (1902). By his own admission, Porter was powerfully influenced by Méliès's *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), which he came to know well in the process of duplicating it for distribution (again, illegally) by Edison in October 1902.

Years later, he claimed that it was the Méliès film that had given him the idea for "telling a story in continuity form," which resulted in *Life of an American Fireman*, produced in late 1902 and released in January 1903. The subject of this film—the dramatic rescue of a woman and child from a burning building by firemen—was a popular one, having been featured in lantern slide shows and other films many years previously. What was unusual was Porter's idea of combining **stock footage** from the Edison archive with staged scenes of the rescue to create a uniquely cinematic form: a fiction constructed from recordings of empirically real events. On the basis of the standard print distributed by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) Department of Film, it was long thought that in the final sequence of the film, Porter intercut, or cut together, interior shots of a blazing room with exterior shots of a fireman climbing a ladder to rescue its occupants, creating a radically



The Big Swallow (James Williamson, 1901).

innovative effect—the illusion of separate but simultaneous and **parallel actions**, which was to become a basic structural element of cinematic narrative.

Life of an American Fireman, however, was a lost film until 1944, when MoMA acquired a 35mm nitrate print from Pathé News Inc. Although MoMA has never claimed that this print, known today as the "Cross-Cut Version," was the original, it conforms in principle to the editing continuity of the original, as it has been described by American film historians from Terry Ramsaye through Lewis Jacobs and beyond. Ramsaye's description was based either on memory or on Porter's own account of the film (more recently set forth by Budd Schulberg in *Variety*, May 9, 1979). Jacobs's description was based on a combination of Ramsaye's version, the Edison catalogue description, and a sequence of production stills made for copyright purposes by the Edison Company, which seem to suggest intercutting at the film's climax.

The Cross-Cut Version is 378 feet long (just over 6 minutes at the average silent speed of 16 fps) and consists of 20 separate shots linked together by dissolves or straight cuts as follows:

1. The fire chief asleep, dreaming of his wife and child, who appear in a circular vignette at the upper right-hand corner of the screen, later called the "dream balloon."
2. Close-up of a fire-alarm box and an anonymous hand pulling its lever (Porter's first close-up to be completely integrated with its narrative context). All other shots in the film are **long shots**.
3. Interior of the firemen's dormitory, with the men first asleep, then waking in response to the alarm—a slight temporal overlap from shot 2—dressing, and sliding down the pole.
4. Interior ground floor of the firehouse, actually an outdoor set, with the pole in the center on which no one has yet appeared; workers harness the horses to the engines, and the firemen finally slide down the pole from above at the conclusion of the scene, as the engine races off to the right. There is a significant temporal overlap and redundancy of action between shots 3 and 4, clearly establishing narrative space and time.
5. Exterior of the firehouse as the doors are flung open and the engines charge out, overlapping the action of shot 4.
6. Suburban street scene: Eight engines rush past the camera from right to left, passing a crowd of bystanders (stock footage apparently, since it's snowing in this scene but nowhere else in the film).
7. Street scene: Four engines rush past the camera, which pans (moves horizontally on its vertical axis) dramatically to follow the fourth and comes to rest on the front of a burning house, where a fireman (Edison actor/producer James White) jumps from the vehicle.
8. Interior of the house: A mother and a child in an upstairs room filled with smoke.
9. Exterior of the house: The mother approaches an upstairs window and calls for help.
10. Interior: The woman collapses on a bed.
11. Exterior: A fireman enters the front door.
12. Interior: The same fireman runs into the room through a door at the right and breaks the window (which was open in shots 9 and 11 but closed in 8 and 10).
13. Exterior: Firemen on the ground place a ladder against the broken window.
14. Interior: The fireman carries the woman to the ladder, which has appeared at the window.
15. Exterior: The fireman and the woman descend the ladder.
16. Interior: The fireman enters the window by the ladder and picks up the child.
17. Exterior: The woman becomes hysterical.
18. Interior: The fireman exits through the window with the child.
19. Exterior: The fireman descends the ladder with the child and reunites it with the mother.
20. Interior: Firemen enter the room through the window to extinguish the fire with a hose.

By **crosscutting** (or, synonymously, **intercutting**) seven shots of an interior with six shots of an exterior to depict parallel actions occurring simultaneously, Porter seemed to have achieved—for the first time in motion-picture history—narrative omniscience over the linear flow of time, which the cinema, out of all of the arts, can most credibly sustain. No other medium permits such a rapid alternation of multiple perspectives without destroying point of view. (There were precedents for parallel editing, or crosscutting, of course, in late-nineteenth-century melodrama, fiction, magic-lantern projections, stereopticon slide shows, and newspaper comic strips.)

During the 1970s, however, another print of *Life of an American Fireman* came to light that is based on the paper print filed for copyright at the Library of Congress by the Edison Company in 1903. This so-called Copyright Version is 400 feet long and contains nine shots—the first seven as described above, and then the entire interior sequence (shots 8, 10, 12, 14, 16,



The editing sequence from the Copyright Version of *Life of an American Fireman* (Edwin S. Porter, 1903): two frames per shot, except shots 5 and 6.

18, and 20 combined), followed by the entire exterior sequence (shots 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, and 19), without any intercutting between them. In fact, this use of temporal repetitions and overlapping action can be found in such contemporaneous Porter films as *How They Do Things on the Bowery* (October 1902). Thanks primarily to the scholarship of Charles Musser, the Copyright Version was established as the original, and in the restored print circulated by MoMA since 1985, the two concluding scenes repeat the same rescue operation from interior and exterior points of view, depicting it as two completely autonomous actions.

We know today that early filmmakers often overlapped events across their splices—as here and in the rocket landing in *A Trip to the Moon*—to establish spatial, temporal, and narrative relationships between shots. Yet although this kind of overlapping continuity clearly defines spatial relationships, it leaves temporal ones underdeveloped and, to modern sensibilities, confused. Where, for example, in *Life of an American Fireman*, have the firemen *been* between the time they slide down the pole from their dormitory in shot 3 and appear on the pole on the ground floor in shot 4?

For a while, at least, these questions did not trouble contemporary audiences. Conditioned by lantern slide shows, stereopticon presentations, and even comic strips, they understood a sequence of motion-picture shots as a series of individual moving photographs, or "attractions," each of which was self-contained within its frame. If actions overlapped from shot to shot, it didn't matter, because the temporal relationship between shots was assumed to be alinear—there was no assumption that time moved forward when **cutting** from one scene to the next. Yet spatial relationships in such preexisting forms as slide shows were clear because their only medium *was* space.

Motion added the dimension of time, and the main problem for early filmmakers would soon become the establishment of linear continuity from one shot to the next. Modern continuity editing, on which the

classical Hollywood system was based (and which still predominates today), began when they realized that action could be made to seem continuous from shot to shot, and conversely, that two or more shots could be made to express a single unit of meaning.

Porter himself moved toward this realization in *The Great Train Robbery* (December 1903), which exists in a single authoritative version and is widely acknowledged to be his finest achievement. *The Great Train Robbery* was simultaneously the cinema's first Western and the first film to exploit the violence of armed crime. The most significant thing about the film for us, however, is its editing continuity. Yet although *The Great Train Robbery* contains no intercutting *within* scenes, Porter cut *between* his scenes without dissolving or fading and—most important—*without playing them out to the end*. In Méliès, and in early Porter, for that matter, dramatic scenes are played out to their logical conclusion and new scenes are begun in the studied and gradual manner of nineteenth-century theater. No ellipses occur in the action of a continuous scene once it has begun, just as there would and could be none on the legitimate stage.

Porter saw, however, that a filmmaker can in fact cut away from one scene before it is dramatically complete and simultaneously cut into another after it has already begun. This practice contains the rudiments of a truly cinematic narrative language because it posits that the basic signifying unit of film—the basic unit of cinematic meaning—is not the *scene*, as in Méliès, and not the continuous unedited film strip, as in the earliest Edison and Lumière shorts, but rather the *shot*, of which, as Griffith would later demonstrate, there may be a virtually limitless number within any given scene. In this respect, Porter anticipated the formulation of the classical Hollywood editing style.

Written, directed, photographed, and edited by Porter, *The Great Train Robbery* is 740 feet long (a little more than 12 minutes at the average standard silent speed of 16 fps) and consists of fourteen separate non-overlapping *shots*—not scenes—of actions, which are themselves dramatically incomplete. These are connected by straight cuts in the following **sequence**:

1. Interior of the railroad telegraph office: Two bandits enter and bind and gag the operator, while the moving train, visible through the office window, comes to a halt.
2. Railroad water tower: The other members of the gang board the train secretly as it takes on water.
3. Interior of the mail car with scenery rushing by through an open door: The bandits break in, kill a messenger, seize valuables from a strongbox, and leave.
4. Coal tender and interior of the locomotive cab: The bandits kill the fireman after a fierce struggle, throw his body off the train, and compel the engineer to stop.
5. Exterior shot of the train coming to a halt and the engineer uncoupling the locomotive.
6. Exterior shot of the train as the bandits force the passengers to line up along the tracks and surrender their valuables; one passenger attempts to escape, runs directly into the camera lens, and is shot in the back.
7. The bandits board the engine and abscond with the loot.
8. The bandits stop the engine several miles up the track, get off, and run into the woods as the camera pans and tilts slightly to follow them.
9. The bandits scramble down the side of a hill and across a stream to mount their horses; the camera follows them in a sweeping horizontal panning shot.
10. Interior of the telegraph office: The operator's daughter arrives and unties her father, who then runs out to give the alarm.
11. Interior of a crowded dance hall: A "tenderfoot" is made to "dance," as six-guns are fired at his feet; the telegraph operator arrives, and a posse is formed.
12. Shot of the mounted bandits dashing down the face of a hill with the posse in hot pursuit; both groups move rapidly toward the camera; one of the bandits is killed as they approach.
13. Shot of the remaining bandits examining the contents of the stolen mail pouches; the posse approaches stealthily from the background and kills them all in a final shoot-out.
14. Medium close-up (a shot showing its subject from the midsection up) of the leader of the bandits firing his revolver point-blank into the camera (and thus, the audience), a shot that, according to the Edison catalogue, "can be used to begin or end the picture."

In addition to cutting away from scenes (or shots) before they were dramatically concluded and avoiding temporal overlap, *The Great Train Robbery* contains other innovations. Although the interior sequences were shot in the conventional manner of Méliès, the camera placement in many of the exterior sequences

was fresh and dynamic. Several shots, for example, were staged in depth: in shot 4, the camera looks down on the action in the engine cab from the coal tender as the train plunges through space, and in shot 6, an actor moves diagonally across the frame into the camera lens, rather than horizontally across it—a major departure from the frontally composed, theatrical staging of Méliès. There is what seems to be an effective use of in-camera **mattes** in shot 1 (the moving train coming to a halt, seen through the telegraph office window) and shot 3 (the landscape rushing past the express car door), but it is more likely double exposure or double printing. More significant, there are two authentic **panning shots**—a tilt following the bandits as they dismount the engine in shot 8, and an impressive pan following the sweep of their flight through the woods in shot 9. Finally, there is a suggestion of parallel editing reminiscent of the Cross-Cut Version of *Life of an American Fireman* when Porter cuts from the bandits' getaway back to the bound telegraph operator in shot 10.

Nevertheless, for all of its contributions to the medium, *The Great Train Robbery* was not an isolated breakthrough. As Charles Musser points out, *The Great Train Robbery* was well situated within the already popular subgenres of the chase and the railway travel film (a type of attraction popularized by Hale's Tours, in which the audience was encouraged to assume the role of passengers on a moving train). All of its interior scenes are photographed in the stagelike fashion of Méliès: the actors move from left to right or vice versa across the "proscenium" of the frame. Furthermore, Porter never uses more than one camera angle or position in any one setting, and like those of Méliès, most of his shots are long shots showing the actors at full length. Conversely, by building up a continuity of dramatic action out of thirteen separate shots, not counting the final close-up, Porter had shown that cinematic narrative depends not so much on the *arrangement of objects or actors within a scene* (as does the theater and, to a large extent, still photography) as on the *arrangement of shots in relation to one another*.

Contemporary audiences understood none of this, but they loved the dramatic excitement generated by Porter's editing and by what amounted at the time to his **"special effects,"** including bursts of hand-tinted orange-yellow smoke during the gunfights. So spectacular was the commercial success of *The Great Train Robbery* that the film was studied and imitated by filmmakers all over the world. It is frequently credited with establishing the realistic narrative, as opposed to Méliès-style fantasy, as the dominant cinematic form from Porter's day to our own and with temporarily standardizing the length of that form at a single reel—1,000 feet, or 10 to 16 minutes, depending on the speed of projection. Furthermore, *The Great Train Robbery* probably did more than any film made before 1912 to convince investors that the cinema was a moneymaking proposition, and it was directly instrumental in the spread of permanent movie theaters, popularly called **nickelodeons** or "store theaters," across the country.

More than fifty of Porter's subsequent films have survived. These display a richness of storytelling within the representational system that he had helped to establish. He continued to practice overlapping action in such conventional productions as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1903), a filmed play in fourteen tableaux linked together by descriptive intertitles (which he may have been the first to use), complete with painted backdrops and a cakewalk, and in the social-justice melodramas *The Ex-Convict* (1904) and *The Kleptomaniac* (1905), which are notable at least for their themes. Some of Porter's later work has modest technical interest—he matched camera angles from shot to shot in *Maniac Chase* (1904); employed dramatic, one-source lighting in *The Seven Ages* (1905); used panning shots in *The White Caps* (1905); and experimented with model animation in *Dream of a Rarebit Fiend* (1906) and *The "Teddy" Bears* (1907), as well as animating the title sequences of a number of his other films.

Yet Porter could not adapt to the new methods of filmmaking and the emerging system of representation that developed in response to the rampant growth of the nickelodeons, which by 1907 were drawing one million patrons per day. Their popularity had created a public demand for story films that forced the rationalization of production, which in his managerial capacity, at any rate, Porter initially encouraged. As production became ever more hierarchical and rigorous, however, he left Edison to form his own production company. This eventually became the independent Rex Film, which he sold to Universal Film Manufacturing Company in 1912 to join Adolph Zukor as director-general of the Famous Players Film Company. There he supervised the entire output and directed conventionally successful adaptations of novels and plays until he left the business in 1916.

Like Méliès, Porter had a genius for constructing narratives that communicated with early audiences at a certain crucial point in their developing relationship with the screen. The overlapping continuities of *How They Do Things on the Bowery* (1902), *Life of an American Fireman* (1903), *The Kleptomaniac* (1905), and *Rescued from an Eagle's Nest* (1908) told their stories in ways their audiences could comfortably understand.

Ironically, it was the work of Porter, as much as that of any other filmmaker, that had created the nickelodeon boom. Before the rise of these nickelodeon theaters (1905–1906), exhibition was carried out in a wide variety of sites: vaudeville theaters, summer parks, small specialized storefront theaters, lecture halls, churches, saloons, and between acts of plays by repertory companies touring the nation's opera houses. With vaudeville theaters in major cities paying the largest fees and giving the greatest visibility to motion pictures, fierce competition existed among such houses by the turn of the century. These theaters hired and advertised the name of the exhibition service as much as or more than the films ("The Cinématographe," "The Biograph," and so on). During the novelty period (1895–1897), major exhibitors either made their own films (the Lumières' Cinématographe) or were closely affiliated with a production company (the Vitascope with the Edison Manufacturing Company). The exhibition service would supply the theater with an "operator" and a short (eight to fifteen minutes) program of films. At this point, then, the film industry functioned as a unit, with the producers leasing a complete film service of projector, projectionist, and shorts to the vaudeville houses as a self-contained "act."

By 1897, this pattern had changed, as producers began to sell projectors and films outright to itinerant exhibitors, who would travel with their shows from one temporary location—theaters, fairgrounds, circuses, lyceums, and the like—to the next, as the novelty of their programs wore off. Itinerant exhibition separated that function from production for the first time and gave the exhibitor a large degree of control over early film form, because he was responsible for arranging the one-shot films purchased from producers into coherent, crowd-pleasing programs. This process, which often involved the addition of narration, music, and sound effects, was effectively a form of editing, and the itinerant projectionists of 1897 to 1904 may be properly regarded as the first "authors" of motion pictures.



Yet the practice of selling prints outright, which encouraged itinerant exhibition, simultaneously discriminated against the owners of permanent sites and inhibited their future growth. In 1903, in response to this situation, Harry J. and Herbert Miles, operating between offices in New York and San Francisco, functioned as middlemen between producers and exhibitors, buying prints from the former and leasing them to the latter for 25 percent of the purchase price. Later, rental fees would be set according to production costs and admission returns per film, but the exchange system of distribution quickly caught on because it handsomely profited everyone concerned. The new film brokers, or "distributors," literally made fortunes by renting the same prints to different exhibitors over and over again; exhibitors found that they could vary their programs without financial risk and reduce overhead at the same time; and producers ultimately experienced a surge in demand so enormous that it forced the wholesale industrialization of production previously described.

The most immediate effect of the rapid formation and rise of the distribution sector was the "nickelodeon boom," in which the number of permanent theaters in the United States mushroomed from a mere handful in 1904 to between 8,000 and 10,000 by 1908. There had been such theaters in the United States since 1896, but few survived more than two or three years. Storefront theaters did not become very profitable over the long term until the exchange system of distribution created an economic context for them and gave birth to the nickelodeons. Named for the original "Nickelodeon" (ersatz Greek for "nickel theater") that opened in Pittsburgh in 1905, these were makeshift exhibition sites lodged in converted storefronts that showed from ten to sixty minutes' worth of shorts for an admission price of five to ten cents, depending on the amenities, such as piano accompaniment and cushioned seats, and the location. Although they were originally associated with working-class audiences, nickelodeons appealed increasingly to segments of the middle class as the decade wore on, becoming identified in the public mind with narrative. Their rapid spread across the country by the end of 1908 forced the standardization of film length at one reel, or 1,000 feet—about 16 minutes at the average silent speed of 16 fps—to facilitate new economies of production, distribution, and exhibition.

(left) The original "Nickelodeon" in Pittsburgh (1905).



Rescued from an Eagle's Nest (Edwin S. Porter, 1908).

This was the industrial system that Porter resisted and ultimately rejected. But before he left Edison in 1909, he did something that, by circumstance, was to prove immensely important to the history of cinema. His otherwise undistinguished melodrama *Rescued from an Eagle's Nest* (1908) provided a needy young actor named David Wark Griffith with his first leading role in films and marked the beginning of a career that was to last forty years and bring the embryonic narrative cinema to a high point of development. A chain of rejected stories and failed plays led him inexorably to the Edison Corporation studios with a scenario based on a work by the French playwright Victorien Sardou (1831–1908), *La Tosca*. This Porter flatly rejected as having too many scenes, but he offered Griffith a salary of $5 a day to appear in a film of his own, whose improbable story was based on a real event. In it, Griffith, who was more than a little ashamed to have accepted work as a film actor, played a heroic woodcutter who rescues his infant child from the mountain aerie of a large and vicious eagle, wrestling the bird to its death in the process.

When *Rescued from an Eagle's Nest* first appeared on the screen in early 1908, Porter had already abdicated his position of creative leadership in film, but the technology of cinema had long been born and the rudiments of its narrative language evolved. The cinema now awaited its first great narrative artist, who would refine that language, elaborate it, and ultimately transcend it.



Sarah Bernhardt in *Les amours de la reine Élisabeth* (*The Loves of Queen Elizabeth*; Henri Desfontaines and Louis Mercanton, 1912, for Histrionic Films).



02

International Expansion, 1907–1918

The United States

The Early Industrial Production Process

By 1908, the cinema had risen from the status of a risky commercial venture to that of a permanent and full-scale, if not yet a major and respectable, industry. In that year, there were 10,000 nickelodeons and 100 film exchanges operating in the United States, and they were supplied by about 20 "manufacturers" who churned out films at the rate of 1 to 2 one-reelers per director per week. A similar situation existed on the Continent and in Britain, and by the time Griffith entered the cinema, the studios (or "factories") of the Western world could scarcely keep up with the public demand for new films.

Furthermore, the novelty of the medium was such that almost anything the studios could produce, regardless of quality, was gobbled up by the international network of distribution and exchange. Although the introduction of mercury-vapor lamps encouraged several companies to construct indoor studios as early as 1903, films were generally shot out of doors in a single day on budgets of $200 to $500 and were rigorously limited to one reel of about 1,000 feet in length, with a running time of ten to sixteen minutes, depending on projection speed. Nearly all of the films were put together on an

assembly-line basis, following the stagebound narrative conventions of Méliès and the overlapping continuities of Porter, with natural backgrounds and few, if any, retakes. Not surprisingly, industry emphasis on speed and quantity of production militated against creative experiment and demanded the detailed division of labor. Industrial conditions between 1907 and 1913 clearly motivated cost-efficient production practices and encouraged a trend toward centralization at the same time that they discouraged formal experiment, except in the service of increased narrative clarity. So from the nickelodeon boom to the advent of features, the main industrial tendency was toward centralization and standardization of production practice, and the uniform product was the one-reel film.

Nevertheless, financial competition among rival production companies was fierce and frequently lawless. Though Thomas Edison claimed ownership of essential patents for the motion-picture camera, many companies were using versions of his machines without paying royalties. Hundreds of suits and countersuits were filed by Edison and his competitors during this renegade period of rampant growth. At the other end of the industry, relationships between distributors and exhibitors became increasingly strained. Because copyright law for motion pictures was still being defined by the courts and legislatures, and since in any case, most production companies did not bother to copyright their pictures, the majority of films were more or less in the public domain, and prints were often stolen, pirated, and illicitly duplicated, just as books had been before 1893.

The Motion Picture Patents Company

The most powerful American production companies banded together under joint Edison-Biograph leadership in a protective trade association called the Motion Picture Patents Company, or the MPPC, on December 18, 1908. To ensure their continued dominance of the market, Edison, Biograph, Vitagraph, Essanay, Kalem, Selig Polyscope, Lubin, Star Film, Pathé Frères, and Kleine Optical (the largest domestic distributor of foreign films) pooled the sixteen most significant U.S. patents for motion-picture technology and entered into an exclusive contract with Eastman-Kodak for the supply of raw **film stock**.

The MPPC, also known simply as the "Trust," sought to control every segment of the industry through issuing licenses and assessing royalties therefrom. The use of its patents was granted only to licensed equipment manufacturers, and film stock could be sold only to licensed producers; licensed producers and importers were required to fix rental prices at a minimum level and to set quotas for foreign footage to reduce competition; MPPC films could be sold only to licensed distributors, who could lease them only to licensed exhibitors; and only licensed exhibitors had the right to use MPPC projectors and rent company films. To this seemingly airtight system was added the General Film Company, which integrated the licensed distributors into a single corporate entity in 1910—the same year in which motion-picture attendance in the United States rose to 26 million people a week.

Although it was clearly monopolistic in practice and intent, the MPPC helped stabilize the American film industry during a period of unprecedented growth and change by standardizing exhibition practice, increasing the efficiency of distribution, and regularizing pricing in all three sectors. Furthermore, in the days when clarity of image and synchronization of camera and projector were still highly unreliable, Patents Company producers made the best films in the business because of their monopoly on the highest-quality equipment and film stock. MPPC films were generally static and unimaginative in narrative terms (Vitagraph and Biograph films were clear exceptions), but they nevertheless offered their viewers a degree of technical competence that few other manufacturers could match. For this reason, and because General Film could guarantee national distribution, many foreign distributors who were immune to the coercive machinery of the Patents Company did business with it willingly. Had things gone according to plan, the MPPC would have completely monopolized the film industry of the United States and a large part of the Western world by 1911 or 1912. Yet the collusive nature of the Trust also provoked a reaction against it that ultimately destroyed it and gave the industry its modern form.

Almost from the outset, there was widespread resistance to the MPPC from independent distributors (numbering 10 or more in early 1909) and exhibitors (estimated at 2,000 to 2,500), and in January 1909, they formed their own trade association, the Independent Film Protective Association—reorganized that fall as the National Independent Moving Picture Alliance—to provide financial and legal support against the Trust.

A more effective and powerful anti-Trust organization was the Motion Picture Distributing and Sales Company, which began operations in May 1910, three weeks after the inception of General Film, and which

eventually came to serve forty-seven exchanges in twenty-seven cities. For nearly two years, independents were able to present a united front through the Sales Company, which finally split into two rival camps in the spring of 1912: the Mutual Film-Supply Company and Universal Film Manufacturing Company. By imitating MPPC practices of combination and licensing, the early independents were able to compete effectively against the Trust: in the Trust's first three years, the independents netted about 40 percent of all American film business.

Film length had originally been standardized at one reel, out of a conviction that the public had a negligible attention span and would not sit still for more. The entire MPPC system was geared toward the production of one-reelers, and its licensees were expressly forbidden to make or to distribute films of greater length. Until 1908, source material for most fiction films was freely borrowed from popular stage plays, comic strips, and songs, which gave the audience a contemporary frame of reference for the action and contributed to narrative clarity.

However, in 1908, a court ruling made motion pictures subject to the same copyright restrictions as other dramatic productions. This encouraged filmmakers to turn to the classics, whose copyright lineage was often less clear than that of contemporary works, and to produce such anomalies as one-reel versions of fifteen Shakespeare plays; five Dickens novels; three Wagner operas; and *The Scarlet Letter* (1908), *Vanity Fair* (1911), and *Ben Hur* (1907); although most production during this period featured more popular subjects. When films such as J. Stuart Blackton's five-reel *The Life of Moses* (1909) and D. W. Griffith's two-reel *His Trust* (1911) were produced by Patents Company members (Vitagraph and Biograph, respectively), these were released to exhibitors in serial fashion at the rate of one reel a week, which seriously damaged their continuity. In open revolt against this practice, many exhibitors began to hold up the first reel of a multireel film until they had received the others and could show them sequentially on the same bill—a procedure that ultimately forced the MPPC to release Griffith's second **two-reeler**, *Enoch Arden* (1911), as a single film.



William V. Ranous and Helen Gardner in *Vanity Fair* (Charles Kent, 1911).

The Advent of the Feature Film

The multiple-reel film—which came to be called a **feature**, in the vaudevillian sense of a headline attraction—had gained general acceptance in 1911 with the release of two European imports, *The Crusaders* (four reels) and *Dante's Inferno* (or *Inferno*, five reels). Yet it was the smashing success of the four-reel French film *Les amours de la reine Élisabeth* (*The Loves of Queen Elizabeth*; Henri Desfontaines and Louis Mercanton, 1912), starring the celebrated stage actress Sarah Bernhardt, that convinced the industry of the feature's commercial viability in America. Produced for the Histrionic Film Company, *Élisabeth* was a laborious "filmed play," but it proved so profitable for importer Adolph Zukor that he was able to found the independent Famous Players production company with its returns (reportedly, $80,000 on an investment of $18,000, the amount he paid for the U.S. distribution rights).

Even more persuasive was the huge American success of the nine-reel Italian superspectacle *Quo vadis?* in the spring of 1913. Directed by Enrico Guazzoni (1876–1949) for the Cines Company, this film contained vast crowd scenes and lavish special effects that kept audiences entranced during its running time of more than two hours, and it proved to American producers beyond question that the future of cinema lay at least in part in the feature film. *Quo vadis?* also established another important precedent: it was shown exclusively in first-class legitimate theaters, rather than in nickelodeons, and thus attracted a more prosperous and sophisticated audience than the American cinema had enjoyed at any time since its birth. The



international success of *Quo vadis?* was so great that it permitted Italy to capture a large share of the world market until the outbreak of World War I, and the film was followed in early 1914 by a twelve-reel historical blockbuster, Giovanni Pastrone's (1883–1959) masterly *Cabiria*. In its liberal camera movement, elaborate **sets**, and skillfully constructed narrative, *Cabiria* anticipated the great epics of Griffith.

At first, there were difficulties in distributing features, because the exchanges associated with both the Patents Company and the independents were geared toward cheaply made one-reel shorts. Owing to their more elaborate production values, features had relatively higher negative costs and were put at a disadvantage by a system that charged a uniform price per foot. By 1914, however, national feature distribution alliances were organized that correlated pricing with a film's negative cost and box-office receipts (among the first were Adolph Zukor and Jesse L. Lasky's Paramount, Warners' Features, and Lou Selznick's World Film Company), and these new exchanges demonstrated the economic advantage of multiple-reel films over shorts.

Exhibitors quickly learned that features could command higher admission prices and longer runs; single-title packages were also cheaper and easier to advertise than programs of multiple titles. On the manufacturing side, producers found that the higher expenditure for features was readily amortized by high-volume sales to distributors, who in turn were eager to share in the higher admission returns from the theaters. Soon the whole industry would reorganize itself around the economics of the multiple-reel film, and the effects of this restructuring gave motion pictures their characteristic modern form in almost every sense.

To accommodate the new films and their new audiences, a new kind of movie theater sprang up across the country, the first of which was the 3,300-seat Strand, opened by Mitchell L. Marks in the heart of the Broadway theater district of Manhattan in 1914. No longer converted storefronts with sawdust-covered floors and hard seats, the new theaters were the earliest of the big, comfortable, and elegantly appointed urban "dream palaces" that came to be controlled by the major Hollywood studios in the 1920s. The Strand, for example, featured a two-story gilt-and-marble

(left) Sarah Bernhardt and ensemble cast in *Les amours de la reine Élisabeth* (*The Loves of Queen Elizabeth*; Henri Desfontaines and Louis Mercanton, 1912).



The Los Angeles Palace Theater, built in 1911. One of the "dream palaces" of the early twentieth century.

interior hung with tapestries and crystal chandeliers, plush pile carpeting, numerous lounges, a thirty-piece orchestra, and a monumental Wurlitzer organ—all for the respectably expensive admission price of twenty-five cents. Owing to their luxuriance, these houses required the regular showing of features to attract large audiences at premium prices, and by 1916, there were more than 21,000 such new or remodeled film theaters in the country. Their arrival signaled the close of the nickelodeon era and the beginnings of the Hollywood studio system.

The Rise of the Star System

The MPPC's attempt to monopolize the film industry through patents pooling and licensing was based on Edison's experience with the phonograph, and it failed to anticipate the unique volatility of the motion-picture market, especially the widespread resistance of the independents and the enormous potential of the feature film. Another issue that the Patents Company misjudged badly was the power of the marketing

strategy that has come to be known as the "star system." Borrowed from the theater industry, this system involves the creation and management of publicity about key performers, or stars, to stimulate demand for their films. Initially, MPPC producers feared that using the real names of its actors, actresses, and directors in screen credits or advertisements would enable them to acquire a public following and demand higher salaries. Thus, for years the most popular of early performers were known to audiences only by the names of the characters they played (Mary Pickford was "Little Mary") or the companies in whose films they appeared (Florence Lawrence was "the Biograph girl"), even though producers were constantly deluged with requests for information about their leading players. In 1909, however, articles about personalities such as Ben Turpin, Pearl White, and Mary Pickford began to appear in trade journals, and in 1910, Carl Laemmle (1867–1939) of Independent Motion Picture Company (IMP) lured Florence Lawrence away from Biograph and, through a series of media stunts, promoted her into national stardom.

Even MPPC members began to use this kind of publicity, although never as flamboyantly as their rivals, and by 1911, Vitagraph, Lubin, and Kalem had all begun to publicize their performers. Biograph resisted this change the longest, and it was not until 1913 that it began to advertise the names of its actors and its chief director, D. W. Griffith, who would soon join the ranks of the independents in any case. The production companies now suddenly subjected their audiences to a publicity blitz of photographs, posters, postcards, and fan magazines featuring their favorite stars, and stardom rapidly began to acquire the mythic dimensions that would make it the basis of production policy in American cinema for the next fifty years.

The Move to Hollywood

Those fifty years were spent almost exclusively in the Los Angeles suburb (originally a small industrial town) called Hollywood—the result of a mass migration of production companies from the East that occurred between 1907 and 1913. The reasons why a full-scale Eastern-based industry moved its entire operation to Southern California during these years have never been completely clear, but the general contours of the phenomenon are obvious enough. In the wake of the nickelodeon boom, as exhibitors had begun to require as many as twenty to thirty new films per week, it became necessary to put production on a systematic year-round schedule. Because most shooting still occurred out of doors in available light, such schedules could not be maintained in the vicinities of New York and Chicago, where the industry had originally located itself to take advantage of trained theatrical labor pools, and as early as 1907, producers such as Selig Polyscope began to dispatch production units to warmer climates in winter.

It was soon clear that producers required a new industrial center—one with warm weather, a temperate climate, a variety of scenery, and other qualities (such as access to acting talent) essential to their highly unconventional form of manufacturing. Various companies experimented with location shooting in Jacksonville, Florida; San Antonio, Texas; Santa Fe, New Mexico; and even Cuba, but the ultimate site of the American film industry became Hollywood. With more than 70 percent of the year sunny and clear, Los Angeles provided the very type of climate required for year-round production (and a wide range of topography within a 50-mile radius of Hollywood, including mountains, valleys, lakes, islands, woodland, seacoast, and desert). The Mediterranean could be simulated on the Pacific coastline, and Griffith Park could stand in for the Alpine forests of central Europe.

Other attractions were the status of Los Angeles as a professional theatrical center, the existence of low taxes, and the presence of cheap and plentiful labor and land. This latter factor enabled the newly arrived production companies to buy up tens of thousands of acres of prime real estate on which to locate their studios, standing sets, and **back lots**. Between 1908 and 1912, many of the independents moved permanently to Hollywood, and several Patents Company members began to shoot films there on a seasonal basis. D. W. Griffith, for example, first took his Biograph crew west for the winter in 1910, and he continued this practice until he left Biograph in 1913 to work in Southern California year round with the independent Mutual Film Company.

The New Studio Chiefs and Industry Realignment

By 1915, approximately 15,000 workers were employed by the motion-picture industry in Hollywood, and more than 60 percent of American production was centered there. In that same year, *Variety* reported that capital investment in American motion pictures—the business of artisanal craftsmen and fairground operators only a decade earlier—had exceeded $500 million. Owing to its poor business practices, the MPPC had



Hollywood back lot: the set for United Artists' *Robin Hood* (Alan Dwan, 1922).

been functionally inoperative since 1914 (it would be formally dissolved in 1918, as the result of an antitrust suit initiated by the Wilson administration in 1912).

Thus, the most powerful companies in the new film capital were the independents, flush with cash from their conversion to feature production: Famous Players–Lasky Corporation (to become Paramount Pictures, 1935), formed by a merger of Adolph Zukor's Famous Players Film Company, Jesse L. Lasky's Feature Play Company, and the Paramount distribution exchange in 1916; Universal Pictures, founded by Carl Laemmle in 1912 by merging IMP with Powers, Rex, Nestor, Champion, and Bison; Goldwyn Pictures, founded in 1916 by Samuel Goldfish (later Goldwyn) and Archibald Selwyn; Metro Pictures and Louis B. Mayer Productions, founded by Louis B. Mayer in 1915 and 1917, respectively; and Fox Film Corporation (to become 20th Century–Fox, 1935), founded by William Fox in 1915.

After World War I, these players were joined by Loew's Inc. (the parent corporation of MGM, by the merger of the Metro, Goldwyn, and Mayer companies just cited, 1924), a national exhibition chain organized by Marcus Loew and Nicholas Schenck in 1919; First National Exhibitors Circuit Inc. (after 1921, Associated First National Pictures Inc.), a group of independent exhibitors that established its own production facilities at Burbank in 1922; Warner Bros. Pictures, incorporated by Harry, Albert ("Abe"), Sam, and Jack Warner in 1923 but active in the industry for at least a decade before that; and Columbia Pictures, incorporated in 1924 by Harry and Jack Cohn.

As their names indicate, these organizations were to become the backbone of the Hollywood studio system, and the men who controlled them shared several important traits. For one thing, they were all independent exhibitors and distributors who had outwitted the Trust and clawed their way to the top through a genius for financial manipulation in the post-nickelodeon feature boom, merging production companies, organizing national distribution networks, and ultimately acquiring vast theater chains. They saw their business as basically a retailing operation modeled on the practice of Woolworth's and Sears. And yet most of these men had been small tradesmen who had gambled on the movie business in the anarchic first decade of the cinema, hoping to turn a quick profit. From penny-arcade showmen and nickelodeon operators, they became "manufacturers" of their own films, then producer-distributors, and finally Hollywood studio chiefs—the temporary custodians of the twentieth century's most influential and culturally significant art form.

Not incidentally, these men were all first-generation Jewish immigrants, most of them with little formal education, from Eastern Europe, while the audience they served—which came to call them **"moguls,"** after the barbarian conquerors of the Indian Empire—was 90 percent Protestant and Catholic. This circumstance would become an issue during the 1920s, when the movies became a mass medium that was part of the life of every American citizen and when Hollywood became the chief purveyor of American culture to the world.

The year 1914 was crucial for the American film industry. The feature film had by this time triumphed almost completely over the one- and two-reeler, or short, which survived mainly in the cartoon, the newsreel, and the serial installment. Profits soared along with costs, and the industry expanded rapidly in all directions, making and breaking fortunes in the process. The companies—most notably, Paramount—that had placed their faith in feature films became prosperous and powerful, while those that had cast their lot with the shorts were destroyed. The pioneers—Kalem, Star Film, General Film, Biograph, and the Edison Company itself—were all wiped out by the new public hunger for feature films, and the MPPC dwindled to insignificance during the war years, finally succumbing in 1918 to the federal antitrust suit previously mentioned.

Vitagraph, Lubin, Selig, and Essanay survived temporarily by merging as VLSE, and the independents Mutual, Reliance, and Keystone combined to form the short-lived but important Triangle Film Corporation, which simultaneously employed the talents of American cinema's three top directors—D. W. Griffith, Thomas H. Ince, and Mack Sennett. Meanwhile, Paramount—and, to a lesser extent, Universal and Fox—had begun to produce features as never before. By 1915, Paramount alone was releasing three to four features *per week* to some 5,000 theaters across the nation.

The vast new market for feature-length films produced far-reaching changes in both the structure and the scale of the industry. As films quintupled in length, and star salaries and screen-rights payments increased dramatically, production costs rose from between $500 and $1,000 per film to between $12,000 and $20,000, and the figures would triple in the postwar years. Production profits were ensured during this period through promotion of the star system and through advertising on a grand scale to increase demand, but producers also sought some means of national distribution to multiply the return on their increasingly large investments. As usual, it was Adolph Zukor who led the way.

The "Block Booking" Dispute and the Acquisition of Theaters

In 1916, Zukor merged his Famous Players Company with the Paramount distribution exchange and twelve smaller companies to form the Famous Players–Lasky Corporation (later Paramount Pictures), which briefly came to dominate the industry by inventing the practice of **block booking**. The block-booking system of distribution forced exhibitors to accept a production company's films in large groups, or "blocks," tied to several particularly desirable titles (usually, prestigious star vehicles) in advance of production. This all-or-nothing distribution policy obviously favored the producer, who was provided with an ongoing outlet for his films, regardless of their quality, and soon every production company in the business had adopted it. Within a year's time, however, the practice of block booking had led to such abuses that the nation's leading exhibitors rebelled against the Hollywood-based production companies, in much the same way that independents such as Zukor had, only several years earlier, rebelled against the Patents Company monopolists.

In 1917, executives of twenty-six of the largest first-run exhibition chains established the First National Exhibitors Circuit (known as Associated First National Pictures Inc., after 1921), whose purpose was to challenge Paramount Famous Players–Lasky by



Famous Players/Paramount poster for *The Eternal Grind* (John O'Brien, 1916).

producing and/or distributing its own features. It was an attempt to gain control over the means of film production and distribution, just as block booking represented an attempt on the part of producers to gain control over the means of distribution and exhibition. In short, both parties to the struggle, similar to Edison before them, recognized that whoever controlled distribution controlled the industry.

Under the skillful management of W. W. Hodkinson, who had originally founded the Paramount exchange in 1914, First National was able to eliminate block booking temporarily by 1918 and to acquire sole distribution rights to the films of the industry's number-one star, Charlie Chaplin. In retaliation, Paramount Famous Players–Lasky in 1919 entered the theater business and bought up first-run houses and exhibition circuits all over the country. By 1921, Paramount Famous Players–Lasky owned 303 theaters, compared to First National's 639. Its war with First National—and later with Loew's Inc.—for control of distribution and exhibition extended well into the 1920s, culminating in Paramount's bankruptcy and First National's absorption by Warner Bros. Before that occurred, however, First National had become a major power in its own right, and Fox, Goldwyn, and Universal had all joined Zukor in the race for theater acquisition.

This race, which naturally required huge amounts of capital for real estate investment, over and above normal production costs, was financed by the great Wall Street banking houses: Kuhn, Loeb, and Company were backing Paramount Famous Players–Lasky; the du Ponts and the Chase National Bank stood behind Goldwyn; Fox was supported by the John F. Dryden–Prudential insurance group; and Universal was supported by Shields and Company. Stock issues were floated for the production companies and listed on the New York Exchange for public investment, and trained financiers began to assume managerial positions within the industry to protect their own investments. The continuing involvement of American big business in motion pictures had begun, and less than a decade after the demise of the storefront theater, the cinema had become a large-scale industry. By the arrival of sound in the late 1920s, it was, by some accounts, the fourth-largest in the nation.

The Rise of Hollywood to International Dominance

Hollywood's rise to power was assured by World War I, which temporarily eliminated the European competition (mainly, French and Italian) and gave the United States dominion over the world film market for the next fifteen years (and even afterward, although the configuration of the market changed with the coming of sound). Before August 1914, the American film industry had been forced to compete on the open market with all of the major European industries and for some years had actually lagged behind those of Italy and France. Just prior to the war, however, France's market position had slipped, and Italy's world-famous spectacles were losing their audience to American competition.

Yet in the United States, the arrival of the big-budget feature had resulted in a considerable rise in the standards of motion-picture production in the immediate prewar years, and the audience had been growing rapidly. When war broke out on the Continent late in the summer of 1914, the European industries were virtually shut down, because the same chemicals used in the production of celluloid were needed to manufacture gunpowder.

The American cinema, however, prospered during the war in unchallenged economic and political security. Although, in 1914, the United States produced just a little more than half of the world's motion pictures, by 1918 it was making nearly all of them. Thus, for four years America exercised complete control over the international market and set up a formidable worldwide distribution system, and between 1914 and 1918, the world at large, including Asia and Africa (but excepting the belligerent Germany), saw nothing but American films, if it saw films at all. In 1919, immediately following the Treaty of Versailles, 90 percent of all films screened in Europe were American, and the figure for South America was, and would remain for years, nearly 100 percent. During the 1920s, of course, the European figures would decline significantly, as Germany and the Soviet Union became major powers in world cinema and as other nations attempted to shield their industries with protective laws. Nevertheless, World War I had placed the American film industry in a position of undisputed economic and artistic leadership—a position it would maintain until the coming of sound.



Charles Pathé's monopoly proclaimed.

Expansion on the Continent

The Empire of Pathé Frères

From 1898 to 1904, the French cinema was dominated by Georges Méliès, whose stagebound fantasies became so widely popular that all other producers were forced to imitate his techniques in order to compete with him. This meant that trick photography and the static camera became key features of French films until about 1905. Nevertheless, Méliès's commercial influence began to decline in the latter half of the decade, as his Star Film Company, basically a small-scale artisanal business, was driven into competition with the ruthless and monopolistic Pathé Frères, founded in 1896 by the former phonograph manufacturer Charles Pathé (1863–1957).

Financed by some of France's largest corporations, Pathé acquired the Lumière patents in 1902 and commissioned the design of an improved studio camera that soon dominated the market on both sides of the Atlantic (it has been estimated that before 1918, 60 percent of all films were shot with a Pathé). Pathé also manufactured his own film stock and in 1902 established a vast production facility at Vincennes, where films were turned out on an assembly-line basis. The following year, he began to open foreign sales agencies, which rapidly developed into full-blown production companies. Soon there were Pathé agents all over the world. In addition, Pathé acquired permanent exhibition sites in every part of Europe, building, in 1906, the world's first luxury cinema in Paris (the Omnia-Pathé), and by 1908, the company dominated distribution on the Continent.

Thus, while he did not totally eliminate his competition, Charles Pathé realized within the structure of a single organization what Edison was unable to achieve through the conglomerate MPPC (of which Pathé and Star formed the Continental wing)—a complete vertical monopoly over every aspect of the industry. In 1908, Pathé marketed twice as many films in the United States as all of the American production companies put together, and by 1909, the same situation existed in Great Britain.

With Pathé's profits fifty to one hundred times the cost of making its negatives, the company was able to become Méliès's distributor for the stormy years

between 1911 and 1913, after which the "alchemist of light" abandoned his alchemy altogether. In 1923, Méliès was forced to sell his negatives for the chemical value of the celluloid (this is the reason that fewer than 140 of his 500 films survive), and in 1929, he was found operating a gift kiosk in a Paris Métro station—like so many of the cinema's great pioneers, utterly forgotten.

The director-general of Pathé's huge studios at Vincennes was Ferdinand Zecca (1864–1947), a former music-hall singer whose canny instincts for what the public would pay to see contributed fundamentally to his employers' enormous financial success. Like Méliès, Zecca specialized in story films, and he was thoroughly conversant with the former magician's cinematic tricks. Yet in most of his productions, Zecca broke away from the Méliès tradition of filmed theater by shooting out of doors and occasionally panning his camera to follow an action. His first films were realistic one-reel melodramas of the lower classes, such as *L'histoire d'un crime* (1901) and *Les victimes de l'alcoolisme* (1902), but he went on to become a master of many genres, including the historical romance, fantasy, farce, religious spectacle, and the highly popular *actualité reconstituée*, or "reconstructed newsreel," innovated by Méliès.

Furthermore, borrowing freely from the chase films of England's Brighton school, Zecca developed a uniquely Gallic version of the type—the *course comique* ("comic chase"), in which cutting for parallel action was combined with trick photography à la Méliès to achieve not suspense, but laughter. With titles such as *Dix femmes pour un mari* (*Ten Wives for One Husband*), *La course à la perruque* (*The Pursuit of the Wig*), and *La course aux tonneaux* (*The Pursuit of the Beer Barrels*)—all 1905—most of these films were shot in the streets of Paris and had a vitality and an inventiveness that impressed the young Mack Sennett, among others, who found in them the model for his own Keystone Kops.

Zecca remained with Pathé until its dissolution in 1939, but he never evolved beyond being an intelligent synthesizer of the discoveries of others. Like his German counterpart Oskar Messter, he is best remembered as an authentic primitive who upgraded and varied the content of his nation's films and who worked toward the refinement of the medium generally, without making any unique personal contributions.

Another Pathé talent was the comedian Max Linder (1883–1925), who became world-famous for his subtle impersonation of an elegant but disaster-prone man-about-town in prewar Paris. Linder wrote and directed most of his four hundred films and had a profound influence on the work of Charlie Chaplin in the next decade. Finally, it should be remarked that in 1910, Pathé inaugurated the first regular weekly newsreel, the *Pathé Gazette*, which acquired an international following in the years before the war.

Louis Feuillade and the Rise of Gaumont

Pathé's only serious rival on the Continent at this time was Gaumont Pictures, founded by the engineer-inventor Léon Gaumont (1864–1946) in 1895. Though never more than a quarter of the size of Pathé, Gaumont followed the same pattern of expansion, manufacturing its own equipment and mass-producing films under a supervising director (through 1906, Alice Guy [1875–1968], the cinema's first woman director; afterward, Louis Feuillade [1873–1925]). Like Pathé, Gaumont opened foreign offices and acquired theater chains, and for nearly a decade after their construction in 1905, its studios at La Villette were the largest in the world.



Alice Guy at Gaumont Pictures.





Fantômas (Louis Feuillade, 1913–1914): composition in depth.

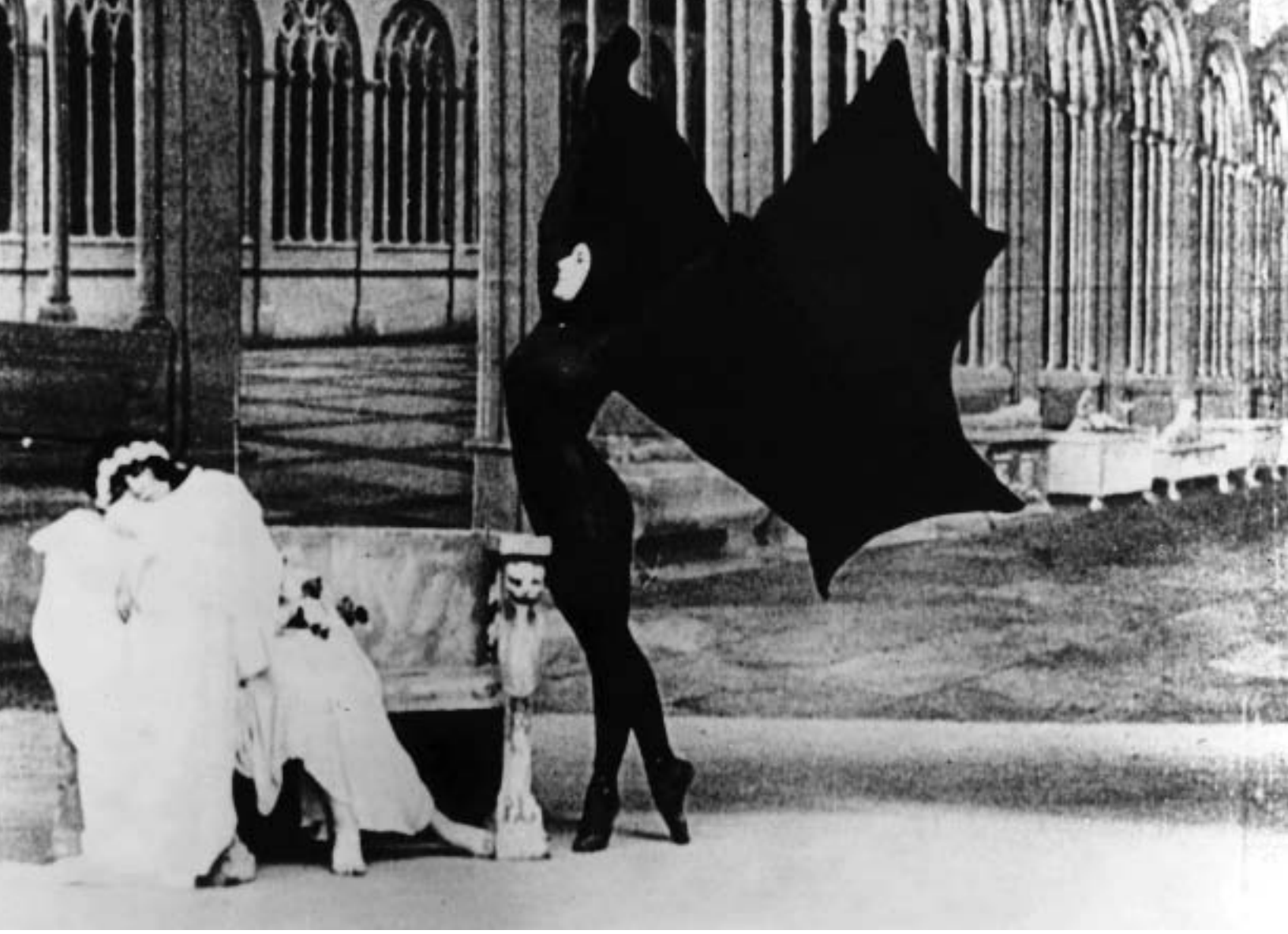
From 1914 to 1920, Gaumont was able to dominate the French cinema, largely through the popular success of Feuillade. Formerly a scriptwriter for Pathé, Feuillade had begun his career at Gaumont in 1906 by directing comic shorts and chase films in the manner of Zecca. He made hundreds of narrative films during the next few years and finally came into his own with the serial detective film *Fantômas*, shot in five episodes of four to six parts each in 1913 and 1914. This type of film had been originated by Victorin Jasset (1862–1913), an ex-sculptor directing for the Éclair company, in the Nick Carter series of 1908. Feuillade brought to the form a sense of plastic beauty and visual poetry that allowed his serials to achieve the status of art.

Fantômas was based on the popular serial novel by Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain about the adventures of the mysterious French supercriminal Fantômas, "Master of Terror," and the attempts of a police detective named Juve to track him down. The incredible exploits of Fantômas and his pursuer are all beautifully photographed on location in the streets, the houses, the sewers, and the suburbs of prewar Paris and offer a strangely lyrical blend of naturalism and fantasy.

(left) Max Linder as Charles Pathé's "Max."

Feuillade's other detective serials—the ten-episode *Les vampires* (1915–1916), the twelve-episode *Judex* (1916), *La nouvelle mission de Judex* (1917), *Tih minh* (1918), and *Barabbas* (1919)—all manifest this same combination of mystery and the quotidian real, and their atmospheric beauty had a direct and continuing influence on French film in the work of Jean Durand, Abel Gance, Jacques Feyder, and René Clair (see Chapter 9, pp. 236–240).

Yet Feuillade was a conservative in terms of cinematic structure. As a director, he consistently rejected serially arranged shots in favor of tableaux elaborately composed in depth, making him an early progenitor of **mise-en-scène** (literally, "putting-in-the-scene") aesthetics, which wouldn't be explicitly articulated until after World War II by the French film theorist André Bazin and the young critics of *Cahiers du cinéma*. This stylistic preference puts emphasis on the creative use of movement and space *within* the shot, rather than on the relationship *between* shots, as does montage.

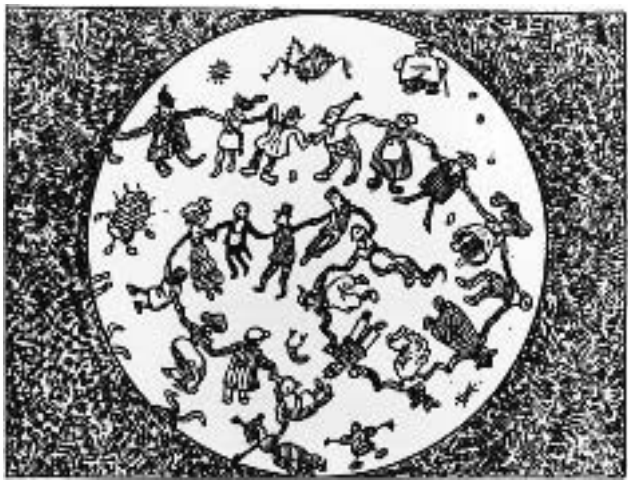


Les vampires (Louis Feuillade, 1915–1916): density and depth.

At the height of his fame during World War I, Feuillade was recognized as a genius. Extremely successful with audiences all over the world, his serials were also admired by contemporary intellectuals—especially the surrealists André Breton, Louis Aragon, and Guillaume Apollinaire, who saw in his skillful amalgamation of realistic detail, dense poetic imagery, and pure fantasy an analogue for their own attempts to "respiritualize" modern art.

The success of Feuillade's serials led to widespread acceptance of the form throughout the world: *Fantômas* is the father of the American Perils of Pauline series (actually directed for Pathé by the French director Louis Gasnier), Britain's *Ultus*, Germany's *Homunculus*, and Italy's *Tigris*, all well received in their day. And their popularity allowed Gaumont to succeed Pathé as the most powerful French studio of the twentieth century's second decade, although, by 1914, France's monopoly on the international market was doomed. In 1910, approximately 60 to 70 percent of all imported films in the West derived from French studios, making France's domination of world cinema as nearly complete as Hollywood's was to be. When the war began, however, France lost much of its market at a time when the rate of Hollywood production was multiplying almost monthly.

The Gaumont studio commanded the talents not only of Feuillade, but of his protégé Jean Durand (1882–1946), whose comedy series *Onésime*, *Calino* (originated by Romeo Bosetti, c. 1909), and *Zigoto*, made between 1907 and 1914 with his comedy troupe Les Pouics, influenced the work of both Mack Sennett and



Les joyeux microbes (*The Jolly Germs*; Émile Cohl, 1909).

René Clair. Gaumont also had under contract the former Alice Guy, Alice Guy Blaché (*La vie du Christ* [*The Life of Christ*, 1906]; *Fanfan la tulipe* [*Fanfan the Tulip*, 1907]), and the cartoonist Émile Cohl (1857–1938), who applied the principle of stop-motion photography to the drawing board and became the father of modern **animation**.

The practice of animating concrete objects by photographing them one frame at a time and changing their position between frames was popularized by the American director J. Stuart Blackton (1875–1941) in such Vitagraph films as *A Midwinter Night's Dream* (1906) and *The Haunted Hotel* (1907) and was already known in France as *mouvement américain* when Cohl began to refine it near the end of the decade. In cartoons such as the Fantoche series and *Les joyeux microbes* (*The Jolly Germs*, 1909), Cohl pioneered the frame-by-frame animation of line drawings, puppets, and natural objects and also became the first director to combine large-scale animation with live action. Finally, despite the French cinema's fall from international preeminence, Gaumont was able to establish a large production studio and exhibition circuit in England, called Gaumont-British, which remained under French control until 1922 and had a substantial impact on the development of British film (many of Alfred Hitchcock's first films, for example, were shot for Gaumont-British).

The Société Film d'Art

The most influential phenomenon to occur in French cinema during the period of international expansion, however, came in the first decade of the twentieth century and was only remotely connected with a major production company (Pathé had partial control of the venture). This was the work of the Société Film d'Art, founded by the Parisian financiers Frères Lafitte in 1908 for the purpose of transferring to the screen prestigious stage plays starring famous performers. The idea was to attract the theatergoing middle class to the cinema by increasing its aesthetic and intellectual appeal—a revolutionary notion at a time in which the medium had only just emerged from the nickelodeon and the fairground tent.

The film historian Kenneth Macgowan has called Film d'Art "the first highbrow motion picture movement," and that description applies in both its positive and negative senses. On one hand, the company used the best creative talent of the stage to mount its productions, commissioning original plays from members of the esteemed Académie Française and employing stars of the Comédie-Française to act in them. Leading composers wrote original scores for these plays, and eminent stage directors were contracted to direct them. From a literary and dramatic perspective, in fact, the credentials of Film d'Art were impeccable. From the standpoint of cinema, on the other hand, the Film d'Art productions were static, if not regressive, in their total embrace of the theatrical model.

For all their intellectual pedigree (and perhaps because of it), the lavishly staged productions of the Société Film d'Art were photographed plays; their directors made few concessions to the film medium. Like a theater spectator in an orchestra seat, the camera occupied a central position with regard to the action and remained static throughout, so that the film frame assumed the function of a proscenium arch. Most takes were long or medium-long shots, which permitted the players to appear at full length on the screen, just as they would on the stage. Each shot was made to correspond to an entire dramatic scene played out from beginning to end, although the acting itself was often notably restrained. Film d'Art sets were constructed of papier-mâché and plaster, and the backgrounds were painted canvas, yet they frequently afforded the impressive staging in depth characteristic of many French films of this period. As cinematic narratives, then, the Film d'Art productions were highly theatrical, but they were also self-contained dramatic wholes, comprehensible to an audience in and of themselves. For several years, they enjoyed immense popular success and were imitated throughout the Western world.

The debut of the first Film d'Art production, *L'assassinat du duc de Guise* (*The Assassination of the Duke of Guise*), took place in Paris on November 17, 1908, and it met with nearly universal acclaim. Directed by Charles Le Bargy and André Calmettes of the Comédie-Française, with an original script by Académicien Henri Lavedan and a score by Camille Saint-Saëns, *L'assassinat du duc de Guise* was hailed by France's leading intellectual journals as a great cultural landmark.

In subsequent years, the Société Film d'Art filmed plays by Edmond Rostand, François Coppée, and Victorien Sardou, as well as versions of Dickens's novel *Oliver Twist*, *Madame Sans-Gêne* (a play by Sardou and Émile Moreau), and Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, before the company was killed off by the introduction of sound. In its prime, however, the Société Film d'Art had so many imitators in France, Italy, Great Britain, Germany, Denmark, and ultimately the United States that it could scarcely compete with them. For several years, the rage for lengthy adaptations of "classical" novels and plays—now known generically as ***films d'art***—swept across western Europe, enshrouding the new medium of film in the literary orthodoxies of the preceding century.

Although the *film d'art* vogue died out almost as rapidly as it had come into being, the movement's financial success had revealed a vast new audience that preferred serious, self-contained screen stories to comic chases and vaudeville acts, convincing producers all over the world to upgrade the content and narrative coherence of their films. It also made a number of people—again, notably Griffith and Feuillade—aware of the necessity for developing a unique style of film acting that would eschew the broad gestures and facial grimaces of nineteenth-century theater in favor of a more subtle and restrained kind of playing. These contortions were important components of the grand theatrical style, appropriate and even necessary on a stage that is distant from its audience and fixed in space, but film acting had to develop conventions of its own in recognition of the perverse thoroughness with which the camera records certain aspects of reality. It might well be said that *film d'art* performances provided a model for these conventions.

Finally, *film d'art* productions were directly responsible for increasing the standard length of films from a single reel to four reels and more. As *films d'art* grew increasingly popular, they turned to ever weightier source material and grew proportionally in length. *L'assassinat du duc de Guise* had been only 921 feet, or fewer than fifteen minutes long at standard silent speed. One of the last and most prestigious *films d'art*, Louis Mercanton's *Les amours de la reine Élisabeth* (*The Loves of Queen Elizabeth*, 1912), ran four reels, or about fifty minutes. Thus, it fell to the *film d'art* movement to inaugurate the feature-length film in the West, though its advent had probably been inevitable since the invention of the Latham loop.

The Italian Superspectacle

No country was more responsible for the rapid rise of the feature film than Italy, whose lavishly produced costume spectacles brought its cinema to international prominence in the years immediately preceding World War I. The Italian film industry may be said to have begun with the construction of the Cines studios in Rome, 1905–1906, by the former inventor Filoteo Alberini (1865–1937). This firm gave the Italian cinema its first costume film, *La presa di Roma* (*The Capture of Rome*, 1905), but devoted most of its first years to the production of short comedies in the French vein and modishly "decadent" melodramas starring the archetypal femme fatale Lyda Borelli (1884–1959), the model for America's own definitive vamp, Theda Bara (1890–1955).

As major Italian financiers became increasingly interested in the film business, however, rival production companies began to proliferate. When Ambrosio Films of Turin released Luigi Maggi's (1867–1946) *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompeii* (*The Last Days of Pompeii*) in 1908, Cines once again turned its attention to historical themes, producing Mario Caserini's (1874–1920) feature-length *Catilina* and *Beatrice Cenci* in 1909 and his *Lucrezia Borgia* and *Messalina* in 1910. Concurrently, Pathé founded Film d'Arte Italiana in Milan to produce historical costume dramas on its own, and suddenly the boom was on.

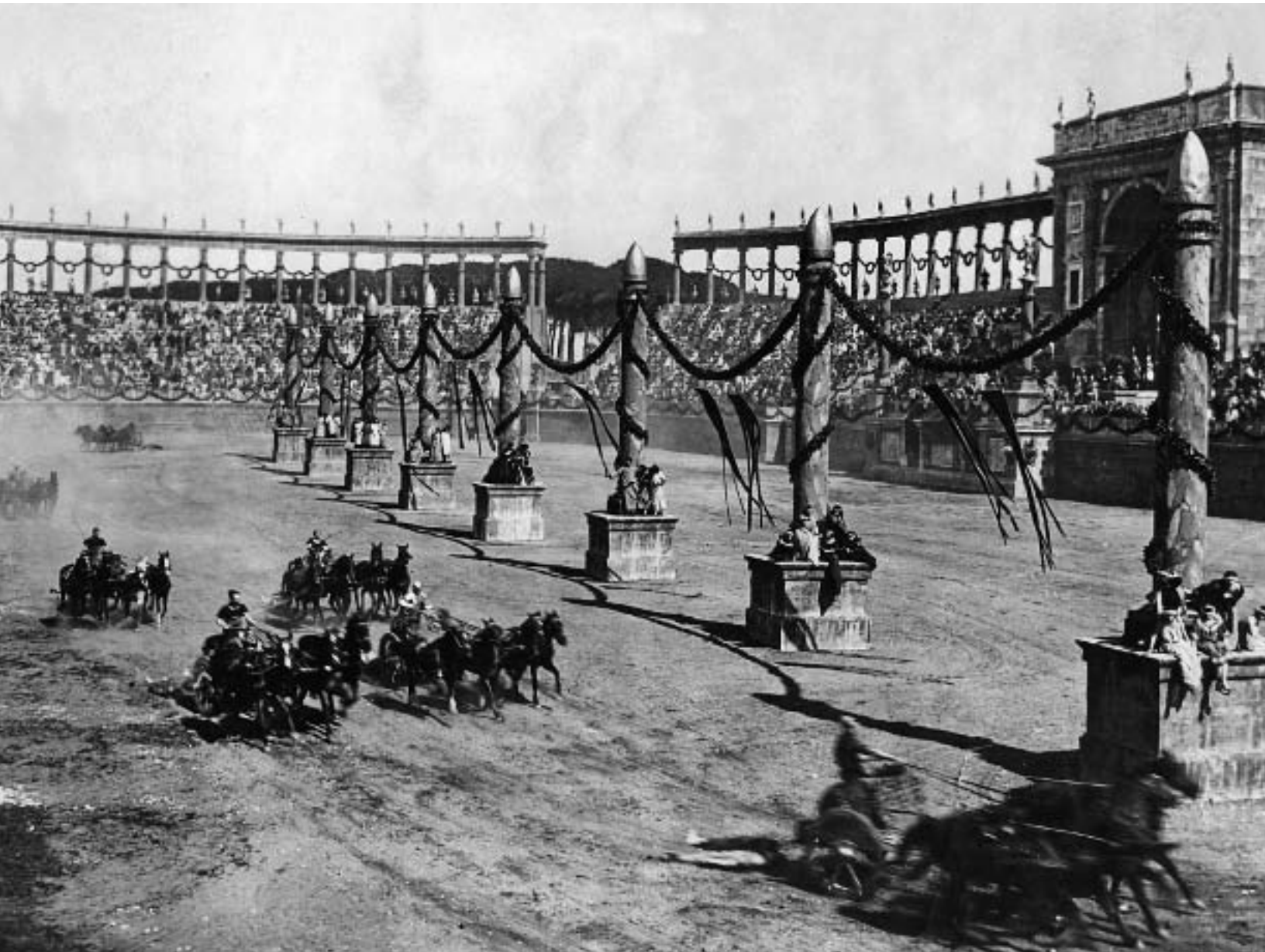
The years 1909 through 1911 saw a flood of historical films with titles such as *Giulio Cesare* (*Julius Caesar*; Giovanni Pastrone, 1909), *La caduta di Troia* (*The Fall of Troy*; Pastrone, 1910), and *Messalina* (Enrico Guazzoni, 1910), but 1913 witnessed the advent of the Italian superspectacle in a ten-reel remake of Maggi's *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompeii*, directed by Mario Caserini for Ambrosio. As Vernon Jarratt points out, however, this film is entitled to its designation as the first of the

(right) The chariot race in *Quo vadis?* (Enrico Guazzoni, 1913).

great **blockbusters** only by virtue of its length and its cast of 1,000 extras.

It was actually the nine-reel *Quo vadis?*—directed by Enrico Guazzoni for Cines in 1912 and released in early 1913—that established the conventions of the superspectacle and captured the world market for the Italian cinema. Adapted from the novel by the Nobel laureate Henryk Sienkiewicz, *Quo vadis?* featured enormous three-dimensional sets designed by Guazzoni, crowd scenes with 5,000 extras, a real chariot race, a real fire representing the burning of Rome, and a Coliseum full of real lions to devour the Christians. In terms of narrative, the film was a series of arranged scenes, but its spectacle properly made it an international hit, returning its producers twenty times their very substantial investment of 480,000 lire (about $48,000 in the currency of the period). So phenomenal was the success of *Quo vadis?* that the Cines technical staff was forced to work in twenty-four-hour shifts for some months to keep up with the worldwide demand for prints.

The successor to *Quo vadis?* was a film of even greater extravagance, grandeur, and distinction—the Italia Company's *Cabiria,* directed in 1914 by Giovanni Pastrone (under the name of Piero Fosco) and produced for the staggering sum of more than 1 million lire (about $100,000 in the currency of the period). Pastrone wrote the script himself after twelve months of research in the Louvre and paid the famous Italian novelist Gabriele D'Annunzio 50,000 lire in gold to lend his name to it and to write the titles. Shot in Turin over a period of six months amid the most monumental and elaborate three-dimensional sets yet created for a motion picture, with exteriors filmed on location in Tunisia, Sicily, and the Alps, *Cabiria* is an epic saga of the Second Punic War between Rome and Carthage; Vernon Jarratt called it "the dizziest peak of the Italian cinema." Its twelve reels develop a





Cabiria (Giovanni Pastrone, 1914).

dramatically sophisticated narrative against a historical reconstruction of the entire struggle, from the burning of the Roman fleet at Syracuse (accomplished through some of the best special effects to appear on the screen for the next twenty years) to Hannibal crossing the Alps and the sack of Carthage.

Spectacle aside, *Cabiria* contains some important innovations in film technique that may very well have influenced directors such as Cecil B. DeMille and Ernst Lubitsch, as well as D. W. Griffith. The film is most notable for its use of extended, slow-moving **tracking shots** (or traveling shots), which permitted the camera to roam about freely among the vast sets, moving in to isolate the characters in close-up and moving out again to reframe the shifting action. Pastrone and his innovative Spanish cameraman, Segundo de Chomón (1871–1929), improvised a dolly (which Pastrone patented) and a primitive crane to achieve these shots. Although Griffith was to use this process much more dynamically in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916), there is no question that Pastrone was the first director anywhere to attempt it on such a grand scale, and for a while, slow tracking about a set became known in the industry as "*Cabiria* movement." *Cabiria*'s other significant innovations were its systematic use of artificial (electrical) lighting to create dramatic effects, its use of careful and convincing process photography, its relatively restrained acting, and its painstaking reconstruction of period detail (subsequently a hallmark of Griffith's and Lubitsch's historical films).

Cabiria was released on the eve of the war and overshadowed by the recent international triumph of the much less distinguished *Quo vadis?* For these reasons, the film did not achieve the financial success its producers had hoped it would. Indeed, the Italian

cinema's brief period of commercial and aesthetic dominance was abruptly ended by World War I, and the nation's subsequent descent into fascism prevented a renaissance until after World War II. Nevertheless, it seems clear today that this last and greatest of the Italian superspectacles provided DeMille and Lubitsch with the model for their postwar historical spectacles and substantially influenced the narrative form of Griffith's epic masterworks. In fact, Griffith spoke of seeing both *Quo vadis?* and *Cabiria* while *The Birth of a Nation* was still in the planning stages, and there can be little doubt of their impact on his development at a time when he was searching for an appropriate cinematic form into which to cast his epic vision of American history.



D. W. Griffith directs.



03

D. W. Griffith and the Development of Narrative Form

The achievement of D. W. Griffith (1875–1948) is unprecedented in the history of Western art, not just Western film. In the brief span of six years, between directing his first one-reeler in 1908 and *The Birth of a Nation* in 1914, Griffith did more than any single individual to establish the narrative language of the cinema and turn an aesthetically inconsequential medium of entertainment into a fully articulated art form. Yet in the many years since his most important work was completed, Griffith's stature as an artist has been the subject of continuous debate among film scholars, his critical reputation suffering more fluctuation than that of any other major figure in film history.

The problem is that Griffith was essentially a paradox. He was unquestionably the seminal genius of the narrative cinema and its first great visionary artist, but he was also a provincial southern romantic with pretensions to high literary culture and a penchant for sentimentality and melodrama. Griffith was the film's first great technical master and its first legitimate poet, but he was also a muddleheaded racial bigot who saw all of human history in the black-and-white terms of nineteenth-century melodrama. In one sense, Griffith presents the paradox of a nineteenth-century man who founded a uniquely twentieth-century art form, and this tension between ages accounts for many disparities of taste and judgment that we find in

his films today. Yet there is another contradiction in Griffith that is less easy to rationalize and that raises issues central to the nature of film art itself, and that is the very existence of such staggering cinematic genius side by side with the peculiar limitations of his vision.

Formative Influences

David Wark Griffith, the seventh child of a Confederate Army colonel, Civil War hero, and local character, Jacob "Roaring Jake" Griffith, was born in a rural district of Kentucky near the Indiana border in 1875. When Jacob Griffith died in 1885, Griffith's mother moved the family to Louisville, where she attempted, with scant success, to operate a boardinghouse, adding urban poverty to the list of formative influences on her son. After a succession of menial jobs in Louisville, he became stagestruck and began to tour the Midwest with traveling stock companies.

It was under these circumstances in New York in late 1907 that an old friend and acting colleague from Louisville advised him that a living might be made selling stories to the motion-picture companies that had suddenly sprung up in the city. Griffith tossed off an uncredited version of Victorien Sardou's play *La Tosca* under his stage name, Lawrence Griffith, and offered it to Edwin S. Porter at the Edison Company studios. Porter rejected the scenario on the grounds that it had too many scenes for a movie, but, impressed with the young man's looks, he offered Griffith the leading role in his current film, *Rescued from an Eagle's Nest*, at a salary of $5 per day. Griffith ruefully accepted. When the film was completed, Porter had no further use for the actor-scenarist, so Griffith approached the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company with some of his screen stories.



D. W. Griffith in *Rescued from an Eagle's Nest* (Edwin S. Porter, 1908).

The Beginning at Biograph

The American Mutoscope and Biograph Company had been founded in 1895 as the K.M.C.D. Syndicate, a partnership of E. B. Koopman, Henry Marvin, Herman Casler, and William Kennedy Laurie Dickson, the inventor of the Kinetograph and the Kinetoscope. Alienated from the Edison Laboratory by a quarrel with the business manager, Dickson had combined with the others to perfect a motion-picture technology that would rival Edison's without infringing his patents. Dickson invented a portable peep-show device (the Mutoscope) for the syndicate and later a camera and a projector (both called the Biograph), all of which legally circumvented Edison patents. Although American Biograph (the word "Mutoscope" was dropped shortly after Griffith was hired) joined the MPPC in late 1908, the firm for years provided Edison with his only significant American competition and employed several of the most talented people in the business—including the man who was to become Griffith's personal **cinematographer**, G. W. "Billy" Bitzer (1872–1944).

In late 1907, however, the company was in serious trouble: it was $200,000 in debt to its bankers, and the public had begun to lose interest in its films. Furthermore, the health and energy of its director, Wallace McCutcheon, were flagging rapidly, and the company had fallen below its standard production rate of two one-reel films per week. The need to hire a new director was clear, but the handful of experienced motion-picture directors in the world at this time were all employed. Griffith, who was hired initially as an actor and a story writer, was soon offered his first opportunity to direct by Biograph's general manager, Henry Marvin, on the basis of some perceptive remarks Griffith had made to Marvin's brother Arthur, the studio's other cameraman.

Griffith chose as the subject of his first film a melodramatic (and racist) tale of a child kidnapped

by Gypsies and improbably rescued after shooting the rapids in an empty water cask. Called *The Adventures of Dollie*, it was *Rescued from an Eagle's Nest* without the eagle and one of a number of films in the then-popular genre of chases involving a lost or kidnapped child. Griffith shot the film in two days on location at Sound Beach, Connecticut, in June 1908, with a great deal of advice and moral support from Bitzer and from Arthur Marvin, who was the cameraman. By the time *The Adventures of Dollie* was given its first screening in July, Griffith had already directed five more films and completed one begun by another director.

Innovation, 1908–1909: Interframe Narrative

In the five years that followed, Griffith directed more than 450 one- and two-reelers for American Biograph, experimenting with every narrative technique that he would later employ in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916) and that would pass into the conventional lexicon of the cinema. Yet Griffith seems to have been scarcely aware of his innovations, at least in the process of making them. They were for him the unformulated results of practical problem solving, rather than of abstract theorizing, and his method of proceeding was always intuitive and empirical, rather than formalistic. Unrestricted by narrative conventions, because there were very few at the time, Griffith simply adopted for his Biograph films what worked best in the particular circumstances, according to the dynamics of the tale. If he had any methodology at all, it consisted of creating analogies between the conventions of stage narrative, which he knew implicitly from his long experience as an actor, and certain uniquely cinematic structural devices that he discovered as he went along. The narrative devices of the Victorian novels that Griffith had loved in his youth also provided models for his innovations. Ultimately, Griffith combined his own analogies, ranging between dramatic/novelistic modes and cinematic modes, with those of others, such as Porter and Pastrone, and molded them into the visual narrative language that we call generically "film." In the course of his career, in fact, Griffith effected a nearly complete translation of nineteenth-century narrative modes into cinematic terms, ensuring through the intensity, stature, and prestigiousness of his films that the cinema would remain a predominantly narrative art form.

Griffith's first movement toward classical narrative form involved the use of a "cut-in" in *The Greaser's Gauntlet* (1908), made four months after *The Adventures of Dollie*. As part of the new seriousness he brought to his craft, Griffith wanted to heighten the emotional intensity of a scene in which a young woman has just saved a man from a lynch mob. To effect this, he cut from a **medium long shot** of the hanging tree to a much closer **full shot** of the same space, showing the two actors from head to toe as they exchange a token of friendship. By changing the position of his camera in midscene, Griffith enabled the audience to read the actors' emotions in their faces, rather than having to infer them from broad gestures. In so doing, Griffith had not only broken up his scene into a number of shots (which Porter and others seem to have done occasionally before him), but had broken down the standard distance between the audience and the action. The cut from medium long to full shot also worked effectively to solve a major narrative problem by emphasizing the exchange of a small gift, and Griffith used this type of cut again and again in the next few months with very positive results.

Thus, Griffith's first major innovation in the Biograph films of 1908–1909 was to *alternate shots of different spatial lengths* (i.e., of different camera-to-subject distances), none of which was dramatically complete in itself, to create cinematic "sentences" within scenes. Later, he would cut long shots, full shots, **medium shots**, close shots, and close-ups together in order to render a single dramatic scene from multiple points of view—that is, from multiple camera **setups**. In the process, Griffith came especially to learn the immense symbolic and psychological value of the close-up, unexpectedly interpolated between shots of other spatial lengths. For the viewer, the close-up has the effect of isolating a detail from its background and giving it greater dramatic emphasis by making it fill the frame. In subsequent Biograph films, such as *Ramona* (1910) and *The Battle of Elderbush Gulch* (1913), Griffith would also learn the importance of the **extreme long shot** in rendering panoramic or epic action sequences of the type essential to *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*.

Griffith's next narrative articulation was a logical extension of the first. In *After Many Years*, an October 1908 screen version of Tennyson's narrative poem "Enoch Arden," Griffith resorted to parallel editing without benefit of a chase. Here, he interweaves the twin narratives of Annie Lee and her shipwrecked husband over a continuum of eleven shots, suggesting the psychological burden and uncertainty of their



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[1] Medium close shot, [2] medium long shot, and [3] extreme long shot from *The Birth of a Nation* (1915).

separation. This kind of editing prefigures not only the **subjective camera** of F. W. Murnau and Karl Freund, but Sergei Eisenstein's "montage of attractions." Griffith would use it for the rest of his Biograph career in films such as *A Corner in Wheat* (1909), where he cut from a shot of the wheat tycoon gorging himself at a sumptuous meal to a shot of poor sharecroppers standing in a breadline (an early form of associative montage, as practiced later by the Soviets).

In other films, he employed cutting to create what he called "objects of attention," when he cut from a character looking at something offscreen to a shot of what the character sees, either literally or figuratively, as he or she sees it. These have come to be known as "motivated point-of-view" shots, and by placing the camera in the spatial position of the character, they induce a kind of optical subjectivity. Griffith used a similar editing trope in other Biograph films to effect the **flashback**, or "switchback," as he termed it—a shot or a sequence of shots that interrupts the narrative present and returns us momentarily to the past.

As Griffith saw it, films were stories that were told through the arrangement not of words, but of moving photographic images. Nevertheless, Biograph's managers felt that Griffith had gone too far, and they closely watched the film's public reception. To their astonishment, *After Many Years* was hailed as a masterpiece, and according to early film historian Lewis Jacobs, it was the first American film to be widely imported into foreign markets. In Griffith's first year as Biograph's director, his films had substantially, if anonymously, improved the company's fortunes, and the Biograph product was soon enjoying the kind of critical prestige normally reserved for successful stage plays.

Griffith's next step was even more radical, for it involved spatial and temporal fragmentation of the reality continuum to create the illusion of three parallel actions and, by using this fragmentation not just as a form of narrative shorthand but as the basis of his film's structure, to achieve a new kind of dramatic suspense. He had attempted intercutting among three parallel actions as early as his eighth film, *The Fatal Hour* (August 1908), but did not fully develop the technique until the June 1909 melodrama *The Lonely Villa.* This film was a remake of Pathé's 1908 melodrama *A Narrow Escape* (UK: *The Physician of the Castle*)—itself a reworking of Pathé's own *Terrible angoisse* (1906), adapted from André de Lorde's 1901 Grand Guignol play *Au téléphone*—which contains an elementary, ten-shot sequence of parallel editing among three spatial planes of action.



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2



3

Three shots of parallel action that conclude *The Lonely Villa* (1909): [1] robbers attempting to break in, [2] the besieged family, and [3] the husband rushing to the rescue.

Yet it was Griffith who took this device to the next level, integrating the cinematic and the narrative to an unprecedented degree through the use of parallel editing across the entire length of a fifty-two-shot film. *The Lonely Villa* shows three actions occurring simultaneously: a band of robbers attempting to break into a suburban villa from without, a frightened woman and her children desperately attempting to forestall the attack from within, and the husband rushing from town to rescue his family and drive away the robbers. In a logical extension of the technique he had employed in *After Many Years*, Griffith simply cut back and forth between one action and another, gradually increasing the tempo of alternation until all three actions converged in the dramatic climax of the tale. The effect of this crosscutting or intercutting among fifty-two separate shots was to transform the *dramatic* climax of his film into its *visual* or *cinematic* climax as well, so that the tale and the telling of the tale (i.e., the narrative technique) became the vehicles for each other. Several Pathé films from this period contain embryonic parallel editing, and certainly other filmmakers had experimented with the technique prior to 1909, but *The Lonely Villa* was probably the first dramatic film to employ the device as its basic structural principle across three separate spatial planes. After its debut, the practice of intercutting passed rapidly and permanently into the cinema's narrative lexicon.

So powerful was the impact of this film that its intercutting was widely imitated throughout the industry and came to be known generically as the "Griffith last-minute rescue." The term underscores an important element of this technique—its generation of suspense not simply through the rapid alternation of shots to portray simultaneous actions, but through the rapid alternation of shots of shorter and shorter duration—the paradigm for **accelerated montage**, as later defined by Sergei Eisenstein. As film historian Arthur Knight has noted, Griffith had discovered that the length of time a shot remained on the screen could create significant psychological tension in the audience—that the shorter the length of time a shot was held on the screen, the greater the tension it was capable of inducing.

This is the chief principle of the intercut rescue sequences for which Griffith became world-famous, though, of course, this kind of editing is not restricted to the chase. It became, in fact, the structural foundation of narrative cinema from *The Birth of a Nation* to the present. In the intercut rescues of the type that conclude *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*, for example, the alternating shots of the simultaneous actions grow shorter and shorter as the dramatic climax mounts, until we end with the visual counterpart of a musical crescendo. In other words, the visual tempo of the cutting for simultaneous action parallels the dramatic tempo of the action photographed, so that content is perfectly embodied in form. Griffith's second major innovation, then, is the syntactical corollary of the first—to the alternation of shots of varying spatial lengths, he added the alternation of shots of varying *temporal lengths,* creating the basis for montage and the montage aesthetics that came to dominate the first fifty years of narrative cinema.

Innovation, 1909–1911: Intraframe Narrative

The discoveries of 1908–1909 (the alternation of shots of varying spatial and temporal lengths) had all been functions of editing, of the dynamic relationship *between* the clusters of frames we call shots (*inter*frame narrative), but Griffith soon showed himself equally

concerned with what occurred *within* the frames and the shots of his films (*intra*frame narrative). For one thing, he began to insist on stories of high quality for his films, many of them derived from literary sources. To be sure, Griffith directed a fair number of chase films, melodramas, and potboilers during his tenure at Biograph, but he also adapted dramatic films from Shakespeare, Poe, Tennyson, Browning, Dickens, and Tolstoi, and some of his films, such as *A Corner in Wheat* (1909), even had serious, if simplistically treated, contemporary social themes. By making the content of his films more serious, Griffith was attempting to dignify the medium of motion pictures itself. Another aspect of this concern was the care he took in selecting and directing his actors.

Griffith was in fact the first great actor's director. Because he had been an actor himself and understood the psychology of the profession, he knew the value of careful rehearsals and rigidly imposed them on his cast and crew, even though most other directors shot their films "cold." For their efforts, however, Griffith often paid his actors four times what they might receive at a rival studio, and by 1913, he had built his own stock company of ensemble players with such future luminaries as Mary Pickford and Lionel Barrymore (both soon to leave Griffith), Mae Marsh, Dorothy and Lillian Gish, Blanche Sweet, Henry B. Walthall, Bobby Harron, Donald Crisp, and Wallace Reid. Griffith also understood, as no director had before him, how immensely revealing the motion-picture camera is of exaggeration and artificiality in characterization, and he coached his performers for naturalness and subtlety of expression.

Griffith's attention to detail extended even to his sets, whose design and construction he frequently supervised. To his employers, the care he lavished on his "nickelodeon" productions must at first have seemed a waste of time and money. Nevertheless, as early as 1909, audiences and critics alike were praising the "naturalness" and "authenticity" of films bearing the "AB" (American Biograph) trademark—as yet the only distinguishing mark of a Griffith production.

By far the most important of Griffith's contributions to intraframe narrative, however, were made after he began to move his company to Southern California on a regular seasonal basis in early 1910. (Griffith was not the first filmmaker to locate in Hollywood: in the fall of 1907, the Selig Polyscope Company had built a small studio there.) Here, in films such as *The Lonedale Operator* (1911) and *The Battle of Elderbush Gulch* (1913), he discovered the importance of camera movement and placement to the dramatic expressiveness of film. Before Griffith went to Hollywood, the camera had been largely static. There had been **panning** (horizontal) and **tilting** (vertical) movements in films such as *The Great Train Robbery*, and Griffith had begun to experiment with narrative panning shots as early as 1908 (*The Call of the Wild*) and 1909 (*The Country Doctor*). Yet in 1910, most film narratives—even those of Griffith—were structured mainly through editing, whether the units edited together were scenes or shots. In California, Griffith became increasingly interested in structuring his films through intraframe, as well as interframe, movement. In the horizontal sweep of the panning shot, Griffith was able not only to follow the movement of his



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[1] One of the train shots, and [2] Blanche Sweet holding off bandits with a wrench in *The Lonedale Operator* (1911); chemically tinted in the original prints.

principals through any given scene, but to engage the audience in the total environment of his films.

Moreover, in the tracking or traveling shot, in which the camera—and thus the audience—actively participates in the action by moving with it, Griffith brought a new kind of movement to the screen. In *The Lonedale Operator*, for example, in order to convey the breathless momentum of a locomotive speeding to the rescue of a young woman trapped by thieves, Griffith and Bitzer mounted their camera in the moving engine cab and crosscut between traveling shots of the engine plunging through the landscape and the desperate plight of the girl. In later years, Griffith and Bitzer would mount their camera in an automobile to follow moving action during the gathering of the Klan and the climactic riot sequence in *The Birth of a Nation*, as well as in the rescue sequence from the modern story of *Intolerance*.

Griffith also discovered the dramatic expressiveness of camera placement during his early California years, becoming one of the first directors to compose his shots in depth, with simultaneous action in the background, the middle ground, and the foreground, rather than on a single plane. As early as 1910, he found that the perspective from which a shot was taken could be used to comment on its content or to create dramatic emphasis for certain of its elements. Thus, Griffith, who had already learned to create visual metaphors through associative editing (*After Many Years* and *A Corner in Wheat*), was now learning to create visual metaphors *within* the frame through camera placement.

Griffith's Drive for Increased Film Length

As Griffith saw his one-reelers grow increasingly popular between 1911 and 1912, he opted for narratives of greater and greater complexity, such as the tale of small-town hypocrisy *The New York Hat* (1912), written by Anita Loos (1893–1981), and the contemporary street drama *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (1912), shot on location in the streets of New York and often cited as a predecessor of Italian **neorealism**. Yet by late 1911, Griffith had begun to chafe under the constraints of the one-reel (ten- to sixteen-minute) limit. He felt that he had exhausted the one-reel form and could continue his experiments in narrative only by increasing the length of his films. He also seems to have understood that for the cinema to achieve the status of an art, it would have to evolve a form commensurate with that of other narrative arts, and that such a form would have to be an expansive one that could provide for the dynamic interplay of its own components. The idea of a serious novel, opera, or play that takes only ten or fifteen minutes to apprehend is ludicrous, and Griffith reasoned that the same was true of cinema.

Judith of Bethulia and the Move to Mutual

It is uncertain whether Griffith had actually seen *Quo vadis?* when he began shooting *Judith of Bethulia* in the secrecy of Chatsworth Park, California, in June 1913, but he had read enough about the film in the trade press to know that its essence was epic spectacle. Griffith's own film was based on a story from the Apocrypha about the Bethulian widow Judith, who feigned love for the Assyrian conqueror Holofernes in order to assassinate him and save her besieged city. The film was budgeted at $18,000, a very large sum for its day, but Griffith ended up spending more than twice that amount in his compulsive quest for dramatic authenticity and grandeur of scale. A substantial portion of the film's budget was spent rehearsing elaborate battle sequences on the 12-mile-square set at Chatsworth, which housed, among other wonders, a full-scale reconstruction of Bethulia. Griffith's penchant for accuracy of detail in costuming and production design accounted for another large chunk of the budget. Yet the most expensive aspect of the film was its length: Griffith shot enough film to make *Judith of Bethulia* a feature-length epic, editing it later into four reels.

This film represents the summation of Griffith's Biograph career. Its complex story is divided into four contrapuntal movements and employs nearly every narrative device Griffith had discovered or perfected in his five years with the studio. Nevertheless, the economy of the film's narrative development is often quite remarkable, given the sophistication of its technique. As spectacle, *Judith of Bethulia* moved beyond anything seen on the screen to date, with its mass scenes of sieges, open-field battles, and chariot charges, and yet, as in Griffith's later masterpieces, the personal drama of the protagonists is never lost amid the epic scale of the action.

Because his Biograph shorts had come to epitomize successful film craftsmanship in the American



Henry B. Walthall and Blanche Sweet in *Judith of Bethulia* (1913).

industry, Griffith was almost immediately offered $50,000 a year by Adolph Zukor, but he turned it down because he rightly saw that Zukor's company would offer him no more creative freedom than Biograph had. More to his liking was the proposition of Harry E. Aitken (1870–1956), the president of a new film-distributing company called Mutual, to come to work for his subsidiary firm of Reliance-Majestic as an independent producer-director at a salary of $52,000 per year. Aitken promised to let Griffith make two independent feature films a year, in addition to the conventional program features he would be required to direct under his contract, and Griffith accepted the offer without hesitation.

On December 3, 1913, Griffith announced his departure from Biograph in an advertisement in the *New York Dramatic Mirror* that modestly proclaimed him to be "Producer of all great Biograph successes, revolutionizing Motion Picture drama and founding the modern technique of the art." The advertisement went on to enumerate, with some exaggeration, his specific technical contributions to the form ("the large or close-up figures, distant views, . . . the 'switch-back,' sustained suspense, the 'fade out,' and restraint in expression") and to list 151 of his most important and successful Biograph films, from *The Adventures of Dollie* through the still unreleased *Judith of Bethulia*.

Griffith took with him to Mutual/Reliance-Majestic most of the stock company of ensemble players he had built up during the years at Biograph, but his brilliant and invaluable cameraman, Billy Bitzer, at first refused to follow him, on the grounds that there was more security in working for a Patents Company member



Billy Bitzer and D. W. Griffith preparing a shot for *Way Down East* (1920).

than for an independent. After several months, however, Bitzer was finally persuaded to join Griffith as his director of photography. He was to stay with Griffith throughout his career and to work on at least twenty-four of the thirty-five feature films Griffith made between 1914 and 1931. With this, the Griffith company was once again complete and ready to embark on producing two of the most important and influential motion pictures ever made.

The Birth of a Nation

Production

Before he turned to his first independent project in late 1914, Griffith took his company to Hollywood and hurried through four minor program features for Reliance-Majestic. Yet he was still haunted by the success of the Italian superspectacles, and he sought everywhere for an epic subject that would enable him at last to rival them. He found it when one of his writers, Frank E. Woods, told him about a failed attempt to film a play titled *The Clansman*. The play, adapted by southern-born clergyman Thomas E. Dixon Jr. from his best-selling novel, was the story of a Confederate soldier's return to his ravaged home in South Carolina after the Civil War and his role there in organizing the Ku Klux Klan. Both novel and play were decidedly mediocre as literature and openly racist in their depiction of Reconstruction. Yet this material had a natural fascination for Griffith, whose romantic image of the South and the Civil War had stayed with him since childhood. In fact, some of his most spectacular Biograph films had dealt with incidents from the Civil War, and now he seized the opportunity to do a feature-length epic on the subject.

Aitken was induced to buy the screen rights to the story from Dixon for $10,000, and Griffith and Woods collaborated on a loose scenario, supplementing *The Clansman* with material from another Dixon book, *The Leopard's Spots*, and with Griffith's own idealized vision of the South. When they were done, the story covered not only the Reconstruction period, but the years immediately preceding the Civil War and the war itself. The film was initially budgeted by Aitken at $40,000, or four times the usual rate for a conventional feature, but as Griffith became more and more obsessed with the project, that figure grew until it nearly tripled. By the time the film was completed at a cost of $110,000, Griffith's entire personal fortune, including his weekly paychecks, had been pumped into the enterprise, along with the savings of many associates and friends.

Shooting began in total secrecy in late 1914, and despite the rough scenario put together with Woods, Griffith worked wholly without a written script. During six weeks of rehearsal and nine weeks of shooting—a remarkable schedule in an era when most features were cranked out in less than a month—Griffith carried around in his head every detail of the editing **continuity**, titles, settings, costumes, and props. So personal an undertaking was his Civil War epic that no one involved in the production but Griffith had any clear idea of what the film was about. The cast and the crew were astonished at the number of camera setups he would demand for a single scene, and no one could imagine how the director intended to assemble into a single film the thousands of separate shots he was taking. Originally composed of more than 1,544 separate shots—in an era in which the most sophisticated of foreign spectacles contained fewer than 100—*The Clansman* (as it was initially called) took Griffith some three months to edit and **score**.


D.W.
GRIFFITH'S
-AMERICAN INSTITUTION-
THE BIRTH OF A NATION
"THE SUPREME PICTURE OF ALL TIME"
NEW YORK MAIL
MAY 2ND 1921

When the job was done, he had achieved on a vast scale the nearly total integration of every narrative technique he had ever used and, in collaboration with the composer Joseph Carl Breil (1870–1926), had synthesized an orchestral score from the music of Grieg, Wagner, Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, Liszt, Rossini, Verdi, and American folk and period songs (e.g., "Dixie," "Marching through Georgia"), which dramatically paralleled the editing continuity of the film. He had also produced the longest (thirteen reels) and most expensive motion picture yet made in America, and because of its length, the existing exchanges refused to distribute it. Griffith and Aitken were forced to form their own company, the Epoch Producing Corporation, to handle distribution of *The Clansman*, amid widespread predictions that Griffith's "audacious monstrosity," as one MPPC member called it, would be a box-office disaster. Within five years of its opening, however, Griffith's "monstrosity" would return more than $15 million.

"Epoch-making" and "prestigious" were the terms most frequently applied to his film, and after a special White House screening (the first of its kind), President Woodrow Wilson, who was himself a professional historian, is reputed to have said, "It is like writing history with lightning." Yet the film's extraordinary success was marred by controversy and scandal. Several weeks after the New York opening, Griffith yielded to pressure from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP, founded in 1908) and city officials to cut the film's most blatantly racist sequences. He grudgingly removed some 558 feet, reducing the total number of shots from 1,544 to 1,375. This excised material has never been recovered, but it apparently included scenes of white women being sexually attacked by renegade blacks, as well as an epilogue suggesting that the solution to America's racial problems was the deportation of the Negroes to Africa.

Despite this compromise by Griffith and President Wilson's endorsement, historians began to assail the director's distorted view of Reconstruction. Prominent citizens and community leaders such as Jane Addams of Hull House, the president of Harvard University, and the editors of progressive urban weeklies started to attack *The Birth of a Nation* for its racial bigotry and to demand its suppression. Oswald Garrison Villard, the editor of the *Nation*, called the film "improper, immoral, and injurious—a deliberate attempt to humiliate ten million American citizens and portray them as nothing but beasts," and the governor of Massachusetts had the film banned throughout the state after a race riot at its Boston premiere. Riots also occurred when the film opened in Chicago and Atlanta, where it was directly instrumental in the birth of the modern Ku Klux Klan. So extreme was the antagonism created by Griffith's epic that it was ultimately refused licenses for exhibition in Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Wisconsin, and Ohio, and President Wilson was forced to retract his praise publicly and to suggest that the film had used its brilliant technique in the service of specious ends.

Griffith was shocked and deeply injured by the unexpectedly hostile reaction to *The Birth of a Nation*. From his point of view, he had struggled for a full year against nearly insurmountable odds to bring forth what he considered to be not only "the greatest picture ever made," but a great epic of the American nation. The widespread public attacks on his film seemed to him like attacks on American civilization itself, and he struck back by publishing a pamphlet, *The Rise and Fall of Free Speech in America*, that vigorously defended *The Birth of a Nation* against censorship by attacking the practice itself, but that offered no answers to the specific charges of racism. The charges were in fact unanswerable, for race was central to Griffith's interpretation of American history.

Epics are concerned with the origins of races, and the "nation" born out of Griffith's epic was quite clearly White America. It may be true, as a recent biographer has remarked, that Griffith's "racial bias was almost totally unconscious," but regional conditioning had so perverted his understanding of American history that his film became in many ways a pseudo-historical tract whose collective hero is the "Aryan" race (Griffith's term). In another sense, though, Griffith was simply confirming the stereotypes of his age, for *The Birth of a Nation* accurately incarnates the myth of Reconstruction propagated by politicians and historians alike in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. If Griffith distorted history, then so did Woodrow Wilson in his five-volume *History of the American People* (1902), published while he was president of Princeton University, which in Volume V tells pretty much the same story as *The Birth of a Nation*, even to the point of spelling "negro" with a small "n"—a practice for which Griffith is still vilified.

In its monumental scale, in its concentration on a crucial moment in American history, in its mixture of historical and invented characters, in its constant

(left) Poster for *The Birth of a Nation*.

narrative movement between the epochal and the human, and most significantly, in its chillingly accurate vision of an American society predicated on race, *The Birth of a Nation* is a profoundly *American* epic. We can and should fault Griffith for badly distorting the historical facts of Reconstruction, for unconscionably stereotyping the African American as either fool or brute, and for glorifying a terrorist organization such as the Klan, but we cannot deny the forcefulness of his vision. Distasteful though it is, Griffith's racism was shared implicitly by most white southerners and many other Americans of his era. The difference is that they had neither the means, nor the will, nor the genius to translate it into an epic film seen around the world by millions. In that fact lies both Griffith's greatness and his shame.

Structure

The Birth of a Nation tells the story of the American Civil War and its aftermath from a southern point of view, treating, as an **intertitle** states, "the agony which the South endured that a nation might be born." It is well to remember that the events it depicts were recent history to the audiences of 1915, only fifty years distant. Like Griffith himself, many people seeing the film in the year of its release knew intimate details of the war from parents who had survived it, and the political and social divisions produced by the conflict still ran very deep.

The film begins with a prologue explaining that the seeds of the tragedy were sown not by the South but by the seventeenth-century New England traders who first brought the slaves to America and who, ironically, Griffith claims, were the ancestors of the nineteenth-century abolitionists. There follows a brief prewar interlude in which two northern boys, both sons of the powerful abolitionist senator Austin Stoneman (modeled on Thaddeus Stevens, Republican congressman from Pennsylvania and leader of the radical Reconstructionists in the House of Representatives), visit their former boarding-school friends, the Cameron brothers, on the family's modest plantation in Piedmont, South Carolina. During this idyll, which is intended to show the grace and charm of southern culture, as well as the general beneficence of plantation life, Phil Stoneman falls in love with the Cameron daughter, Margaret, while young Ben Cameron discovers his ideal of feminine beauty in a daguerreotype of Phil's sister, Elsie. Immediately following the visit, civil war breaks out, and both the northern and southern brothers heed the call to arms of their respective governments.

The next portion of *The Birth of a Nation* deals with the war itself and is very nearly self-contained. It is this part of the film that most truly merits the description "epic," for it combines a sophisticated narration of historical events with spectacle on a colossal scale. From the moment the Piedmont regiment marches off gaily and naïvely to its first battle to the assassination of President Lincoln at Ford's Theater, we are swept along on a forceful and hypnotic narrative current. The siege of Petersburg, the burning of Atlanta, and Sherman's march to the sea are all re-created in battle scenes whose intensity is still compelling, despite a century of technological refinement. Griffith and Bitzer composed these scenes after Mathew Brady's Civil War photographs and shot them from many different perspectives, combining extreme long shots of the battlefields with medium and close shots of bloody hand-to-hand fighting to evoke the chaotic violence of combat itself. For the burning-of-Atlanta sequence, Griffith used a diagonally split screen containing blazing buildings in the upper half and Sherman's relentlessly marching troops in the lower half, all illuminated by bursting shells and flames (according to Bitzer, the only artificially lit sequence in the film).

Griffith continues the personal story of the Stonemans and the Camerons against this panoramic overview of the Civil War. The families' two youngest sons die in each other's arms on the battlefield, and Ben Cameron, the "Little Colonel," is wounded and



Split screen from *The Birth of a Nation*: blazing buildings of Atlanta are shown in the upper half and Sherman's marching troops in the lower; chemically tinted in the original prints.

captured by Federal troops after leading a daring charge against the Union lines at Petersburg. Meanwhile, in the South, a band of renegade Negro militiamen ransacks the Cameron homestead in Piedmont, leaving the family with little but their lives, and Atlanta is destroyed as Sherman marches to the sea.

Concurrently, in a Union military hospital in Washington, D.C., Ben Cameron finally meets Elsie Stoneman, who nurses him back to health in her capacity as a volunteer. Mrs. Cameron soon joins her son in the hospital, where she learns that he is under a death sentence for guerrilla activities, and she successfully intercedes for his life with a reverently portrayed President Lincoln. Despite their sentimentality, the detailed in-depth composition of these hospital scenes, whose actions in the foreground, the middle ground, and the background are autonomous, has long impressed critics with its verisimilitude. In Washington, Phil and Elsie Stoneman attend a gala performance of *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theater to celebrate the surrender of Lee, where they witness the assassination of President Lincoln.

The assassination sequence is one of Griffith's great set pieces and provides an excellent example of his use of parallel editing to achieve tension in a scene. Running a little more than five minutes, the sequence is composed of fifty-five shots, some held for only a few seconds; it establishes dynamic *visual* relationships among Lincoln sitting in his theater box, John Wilkes Booth lurking outside, the president's bodyguard asleep at his post, the audience, Phil and Elsie, and the action of the play itself long before their *dramatic* relationship is energized by the assassination.

Lincoln's assassination, much lamented in the South, concludes the "War" section of *The Birth of a Nation* and inaugurates the most controversial part of the film—that dealing with Reconstruction. This section opens with the ascendancy of Senator Austin Stoneman to "the power behind the throne" after Lincoln's death. Determined, as a title informs us, to crush "the White South under the heel of the Black South" (a phrase from Wilson's *History of the American People*, incidentally, and not an invention of Griffith's), Stoneman leads the radical Reconstructionists to victory in Congress and sends his fawning but secretly ambitious mulatto protégé, Silas Lynch, to Piedmont to administer a program of universal Negro suffrage there. Lynch and his lieutenants, however, organize the recently freed slaves into a mob and commit a series of outrages against the white community, ranging from mere insult to bogus imprisonment and sexual assault.



"Black Empire": D. W. Griffith's version of the postwar South Carolina legislature; chemically tinted in the original prints.

Lynch subsequently becomes lieutenant governor of South Carolina and goes on to preside over an all-Negro legislature that enacts statutes providing for the disenfranchisement of prominent whites and for interracial marriage. While this travesty is enacted in the state capitol, back in Piedmont, Ben Cameron decides that the "Black Empire" of Lynch and his cronies must be combated by an "Invisible Empire" of white southern knights, organized, as a title tells us, "in defense of their Aryan birthright." This is Griffith's account of the birth of the Ku Klux Klan, and it must be said that the account is not much different from that offered by academic historians of his era. Meanwhile, Austin Stoneman has come to Piedmont with his family to oversee the implementation of his policies. The senator has fallen ill in the interim, however, and becomes an easy dupe of the vicious Lynch and of Stoneman's own mulatto mistress, Lydia Brown.

The Elsie Stoneman/Ben Cameron and Phil Stoneman/Margaret Cameron romances start to blossom again in Piedmont but are cut short by the bitter residues of war. In one particularly striking scene, Phil proposes to Margaret, and Griffith intercuts the proposal with a flashback to an earlier shot of her young brother lying dead on the field at Petersburg. Griffith once said, "You can photograph thought," and in this flashback sequence and many others like it sprinkled throughout *The Birth of a Nation*, he







Scene of Phil Stoneman's proposal to Margaret Cameron is intercut with a flashback to her brother's death in the war; chemically tinted in the original prints.

demonstrated his point remarkably well. Finally, after another wave of indignities committed by blacks against whites, the terrorist reprisals of the Klan begin in earnest, and Elsie rejects Ben when she learns of his involvement with the organization.

At this point, the film takes an extremely nasty turn as young Flora Cameron, the family's darling, is attacked (but not actually raped) and driven to take her life by Gus, a "renegade negro" who wants to marry her. Gus chases Flora through a forest and up a cliff, from which she plummets to her death rather than submit to his embraces, even as brother Ben races desperately to the rescue. Filmed amid the beautiful pine forests and foothills of Big Bear Lake, California, this sequence is perhaps the most skillfully edited three-way chase Griffith ever conceived. Yet it is the most disturbing in the entire film, for there is no rational way for a viewer to defend against its wrenching images of racial violence and attempted violation.

After Flora's death, Gus is tracked down by the Klan and summarily executed in a scene that is dramatically apposite but morally loathsome for the legitimacy it accords the practice of lynching. The body is dumped on the lieutenant governor's doorstep as a warning, and Lynch's reply is to call out the Negro militia for a roundup of suspected Klansmen. Old Dr. Cameron, head of the family, is arrested in the process but is ultimately rescued by two "faithful souls" (his black servants), his daughter Margaret, and Phil Stoneman (now turned against his father) and taken to the sanctuary of a small woodland cabin. Meanwhile, Elsie Stoneman attempts to intercede with Lynch on Cameron's behalf, only to find herself being forced into an interracial marriage with the vicious mulatto, who has become "drunk with power and wine" (Griffith's phrase) as the troops of his "Black Empire" run amok in the streets of Piedmont, arbitrarily assaulting and killing whites.

Now the film starts to build to its climax as the Lynch-Elsie sequence is intercut with the "Summoning of the Clans" sequence, in which two hooded Klansmen, or "Night Hawks," ride through the countryside far and wide, spreading news of the Piedmont rampage and sounding the call to arms. As their wild ride progresses, Klansmen are drawn to the Night Hawks like tributaries flowing into a central stream, until a vast army pours down the road to the rescue, in the words of the poet and critic Vachel Lindsay, like "an Anglo-Saxon Niagara."

Meanwhile, Negro militiamen have discovered the cabin containing Dr. Cameron, Margaret, and Phil, and have besieged it with every intention of murdering its occupants. Shots of this action are now intercut with shots of the torrential ride of the Klan, Negroes rioting in the streets of Piedmont, and what has become by this time Lynch's impending rape of Elsie Stoneman, so that we have a suspense-filled, multipronged "last-minute rescue" elaborately wrought of four simultaneous actions converging toward a climax. Griffith heightens the tension of his montage by decreasing the temporal length of each shot and increasing the tempo of physical movement as the sequence races toward its climax.



Gus about to be lynched by the "Invisible Empire" (Ku Klux Klan); chemically tinted in the original prints.

When at last the Klan arrives in town to clear the streets, there follows an action sequence that rivals the battle scenes of the war section. Its dynamic continuity cutting and breathlessly moving camera caused Vachel Lindsay to describe this episode as "tossing wildly and rhythmically like the sea."

After Piedmont is secured and Elsie Stoneman rescued from Lynch, the Klan learns of the besieged cabin in the woods and begins its second ride. Though anticlimactic, this second rescue is more urgent than the first, because the band of Negroes has almost succeeded in breaking into the little stronghold when the ride begins, and danger to the principals is imminent. After a flurry of intercutting, in which the Negroes finally enter the house and actually grasp Margaret Cameron by her long tresses, the Klan arrives to disperse them and save the whites from violation and/or murder.

There follows a parade of the Klan and the rescued parties through the streets of Piedmont, and a new election, easily dominated by the whites. Clearly, the "Black Empire" has collapsed in the face of the "Invisible Empire," as an intertitle had predicted earlier, uniting the white North and the white South "in defense of their Aryan birthright." The two Cameron-Stoneman marriages take place, and the film concludes with a symbolic epilogue in which the God of War dissolves into the Prince of Peace and the final title proclaims, somewhat prematurely: *"Liberty and union, /* one and inseparable, */ now and forever!"*

Impact

Whatever it represents ideologically, *The Birth of a Nation* is a technical marvel. Griffith created it in the absence not only of firmly established narrative

conventions, but of modern cinematic technology—what he might have accomplished with **widescreen** color cameras and **stereophonic sound** is beyond imagining. And to have articulated these conventions and anticipated this technology in a film of epic proportions so early in the medium's history is a monumental achievement that no one can deny.

The influence of *The Birth of a Nation* was not, of course, all benign. For one thing, it is a matter of historical record that the film's glowing portrait of the Ku Klux Klan was directly responsible for the modern revival and expansion of that organization, whose membership had reached 5 million by the time of World War II. Indeed, according to the Klan's current leaders, *The Birth of a Nation* was used as a key instrument of recruitment and indoctrination well into the 1960s. Less pernicious socially, but perhaps ultimately more destructive, was the enormous financial success of the film, which seemed to valorize Hollywood's taste for the emotional, sensational, and melodramatic, as opposed to the rational, philosophical, and discursive, at the very moment of its birth.

As a supremely manipulative film, *The Birth of a Nation* showed the American industry how effectively and lucratively the movies could pander to public frustration, anxiety, and prejudice—a lesson that Hollywood has hardly ever forgotten in its more than one-hundred-year history. Yet precisely because of its remarkable emotional power, its tendency to incite and inflame, rather than to persuade, *The Birth of a Nation* marked the emergence of film as a potent social and political force in the modern world.

At the same time, *The Birth of a Nation* was so clearly a work of genius, however flawed, that it conferred great prestige on the new medium of the feature film when it was most needed. The first film ever to be widely acclaimed as a great work of art and simultaneously reviled as a pernicious distortion of the truth, *The Birth of a Nation* is the cinema's seminal masterpiece, and its paradox is the paradox of cinematic narrative itself.

Intolerance

Production

More people saw *The Birth of a Nation* in the first year of its release than had seen any single film in history. Attendance in the Greater New York area alone was more than 825,000, and nationally the figure was close to 3 million. Griffith had achieved his goal of outdoing the Italian superspectacles on their own terms, and he was universally acknowledged to be the supreme master of the screen. Yet his victory was mixed with bitterness. Attacks on *The Birth of a Nation*'s content continued (indeed, they have never stopped), and the accusation that he was a bigot disturbed Griffith deeply. Early in 1916, still stinging from charges of racism, Griffith determined to produce a massive cinematic polemic against these "powers of intolerance," because they had endangered civilization throughout human history. The resulting film, *Intolerance*, was not—as is sometimes claimed—Griffith's "liberal" atonement for his "reactionary" Civil War epic, but rather a spirited defense of his right to have made it. Both films are cut from the same cloth, and their liabilities and assets are quite similar.

Just after *The Birth of a Nation* was released, Griffith had gone to work on a modest contemporary melodrama titled *The Mother and the Law*. A relatively low-budget feature by its predecessor's standards, more on the scale of *The Battle of the Sexes* (1914) than *The Birth of a Nation*, it was based on a recent case in which Pinkerton guards had killed nineteen workers during a strike at a chemical plant. *The Mother and the Law* had already been completed when Griffith conceived the idea of combining it with three other tales into an epic exposé of intolerance through the ages. One tale would be set in ancient Babylon during the invasion and conquest of Cyrus the Persian (538 BC), another during the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in sixteenth-century France (1572), and another in Judea during the crucifixion of Christ (we can guess which story Griffith saw as most closely paralleling his own recent martyrdom). This promised to be an expensive undertaking, but Griffith had been so elevated by the success of *The Birth of a Nation* that no project, however extravagant, could be denied him.

With no standards left to exceed but his own, Griffith conceived of *Intolerance* on a scale so vast as to dwarf all of his previous work combined. Sparing no expense, financial or human, he threw up mammoth sets designed by the previously uncredited Walter Hall for each of the four periods represented in the film, the most elaborate of which was a full-scale model of ancient Babylon covering more than 10 acres of land and standing some 300 feet above the ground. He hired

(right) The Babylonian set of *Intolerance* (1916) prepared for the "Belshazzar's feast" sequence and its lengthy tracking shot.

sixty principal players and thousands of extras to people the film, and at one point the production's payroll alone exceeded $20,000 a day. Among his eight assistant directors (*The Birth of a Nation* had none) were four who would later have significant Hollywood careers of their own—Allan Dwan, Christy Cabanne, Tod Browning, and Erich von Stroheim. When the project was finally completed, Griffith had spent fourteen months and, it was claimed, nearly $2 million on it. If the film had been the popular success he expected, Griffith would have become one of the richest men in Hollywood. As it was, *Intolerance* produced heavy losses.

The **rough cut** of *Intolerance* ran for eight hours, and Griffith toyed with the notion of distributing the film at this length in two separate parts. Practicality got the better of him, however, and he cut the negative from 200,000 to 13,500 feet, approximately three and a half hours. After the box-office failure of *Intolerance* became apparent, Griffith rashly cut into the negative and re-edited *The Mother and the Law* and *The Fall of Babylon* for release as separate films to recoup his losses. Later, when he attempted to reconstruct the negative, nearly 2,000 feet had been permanently lost, so today we can never see *Intolerance* in its original form.

Structure

For *Intolerance*, Griffith conceived the revolutionary notion of crosscutting not only between parallel actions occurring simultaneously in separate spatial dimensions, as in his earlier films, but also between parallel actions occurring on separate temporal planes—those of the four stories. Thus, the plots of the four stories are interwoven like themes in a symphony until they converge in a crescendo at the film's climax.



Before this quadruple climax, actions occurring in the separate historical periods are episodically self-contained and are drawn together by the recurrent transitional symbol of a mother rocking a cradle, emblematic of human continuity. This image is illuminated by a shaft of sacred light and accompanied by Walt Whitman's line, "Out of the cradle endlessly rocking. . . ." As the separate stories move toward their conclusions, however, Griffith largely abandons this transitional device and cuts back and forth directly between incomplete climactic actions in the process of unfolding on all four temporal planes.

He told a contemporary interviewer: "[The] stories will begin like four currents looked at from a hilltop. At first the four currents will flow apart, slowly and quietly. But as they flow, they grow nearer and nearer together, and faster and faster, until in the end, in the last act, they mingle in one mighty river of expression."

Although the biblical and St. Bartholomew's Day plots are resolved before the more complicated Babylonian and modern stories, for the better part of the film's last two reels Griffith involves us in three separate three-way rescues and a dramatically excoriating crucifixion. In these passages, Christ's progress toward Calvary, the desperate ride of the "Mountain girl" across the Euphrates plain to warn Babylon of its impending destruction, the massacre of the French Huguenots, and the modern wife's race against time to save her innocent husband from execution are all rapidly intercut in shots of shorter and shorter duration to create what is even today among the most exciting and unusual climactic sequences in motion-picture history.

Contemporary audiences, who had only recently been exposed to the conventional, if striking, narrative intercutting of *The Birth of a Nation*, found this essentially metaphorical or symbolic intercutting difficult to understand—not surprisingly, for Griffith was cinematically years ahead his of time. He was already practicing in *Intolerance* the kind of abstract or "expressive" montage that Eisenstein and his Soviet colleagues would bring to perfection a decade later.

Furthermore, the film contains the ultimate refinement of every narrative device Griffith had



Transition: Lillian Gish as the Woman Who Rocks the Cradle accompanied by Walt Whitman's line, "Out of the cradle endlessly rocking. . . ."



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[1] Howard Gaye as The Christ on the road to Calvary in *Intolerance*. [2] The mountain girl on her way to warn Belshazzar of Cyrus's invasion in the Babylonian story of *Intolerance*. [3] The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. [4] Racing to save the boy in the Modern story of *Intolerance*. All chemically tinted in the original prints.

employed in movies ranging from *The Adventures of Dollie* through *The Birth of a Nation*. It uses revolutionary continuity editing, of course, but also huge close-ups, sweeping panoramas, assorted dissolves, **irises**, and masks (including a widescreen effect used for large battle sequences), dramatically expressive camera angles, and finally, tracking movement that anticipates the elaborate maneuvers of F. W. Murnau and the German *Kammerspielfilm* eight years later. For the climactic rescue in the modern story, for example, Griffith mounted his camera in a moving automobile to follow a suspenseful chase between it and a train, just as he had done for the riot sequences in *The Birth of a Nation*. More important, Griffith built for *Intolerance* a huge elevator tower that rolled on rails to track the camera gradually from an extreme long shot of Babylon down into a full shot of actors on the set itself. The shot occurs several times in the film and is still one of the longest and most elaborate tracking shots in American cinema.

Influence and Defects

For sheer technical virtuosity and inventiveness, then, *Intolerance* must rank as Griffith's greatest film. Moreover, Griffith's handling of massive crowd and battle scenes, as well as more intimate personal ones, surpassed anything he had ever done before or would attempt again. Ultimately, *Intolerance* is an erratic but brilliant film of undeniable importance, whose decisive influence on figures as diverse as Cecil B. DeMille,

Sergei Eisenstein, V. I. Pudovkin, Fritz Lang, and Abel Gance is a matter of historical record. As a self-contained work of art, it is by turns ponderous, awe-inspiring, obsessive, and thrilling. The film historian Jay Leyda, in an essay written on the occasion of Griffith's death in 1948, called *Intolerance* "a towering compound of greatness and cheapness," but the filmmaker John Dorr put it more precisely: "*Intolerance* succeeded as a film of spectacle and as a film of narrative action, but not as a film of ideas."

Griffith after *Intolerance*

The failure of *Intolerance* did not by any means end Griffith's career. It curtailed his independence as a producer and dampened his enthusiasm as a creator, but he went on to direct another twenty-six feature films between 1916 and 1931. Most critics see this period as one of marked decline in power. It is true that Griffith made no major narrative innovations after *Intolerance*, but it could reasonably be argued that there were very few left to make before the coming of sound. What seems to have happened is that Griffith lost touch with the prevailing tastes of the postwar era and, therefore, with the popular audience. This was partly the result of rapid social change. Industrialization, modernization, and our involvement in World War I had caused an inversion of traditional American attitudes and values. The nineteenth-century virtues of morality, idealism, and purity, incarnated by the Cameron family in *The Birth of a Nation*, had given way to the pursuit of sensation and material wealth in the disillusioned postwar era. The verities of rural romanticism, so crucial to Griffith's prewar epics, were replaced by the sophistication, urbanity, and wit of filmmakers such as Cecil B. DeMille and Ernst Lubitsch, whose cynical amorality was all but incomprehensible to a director who had never permitted his lovers to so much as kiss on the screen.

Before *Intolerance* had even started to sink at the box office, Griffith was invited to England by the British government to make a propaganda picture in support of the war effort against Germany and to convince America to join it (which occurred shortly after Griffith's arrival). Initially conceived as an extended newsreel on the Somme offensive of April 1917, to be financed by Lord Beaverbrook's powerful War Office Cinematograph Committee, *Hearts of the World* (1918) became instead a privately produced anti-German war epic shot on location in France and England that luridly depicted the effects of "Hunnish" occupation on a small French town.

Griffith shot another film while he was in England—*The Great Love*, a morale booster designed to show "the regeneration of British society through its war activities," according to advance publicity. This feature, which hasn't survived, was produced by Adolph Zukor's Paramount-Artcraft Company. Zukor had agreed to become the American distributor for *Hearts of the World*. Before leaving for England, Griffith had signed a contract with Zukor to direct six films for his company and to oversee the production of several others. Neither English film was a critical success; *Hearts of the World* seems especially crude today in its stereotyping of all German soldiers as beasts.

Returning to Hollywood, Griffith directed five feature films for Zukor in rapid succession between 1917 and 1919—*True Heart Susie*, *A Romance of Happy Valley*, *The Greatest Thing in Life*, *The Girl Who Stayed at Home*, and *Scarlet Days* (his only feature-length Western, which also hasn't survived), all of them (except the last) dated, idyllic romances with little popular appeal. Next, Griffith signed a contract to direct three quickie potboilers for First National to raise money for his newest project—the building of an independent studio on a large estate he had purchased near Mamaroneck, New York, where he hoped to become his own producer.

According to one of Griffith's biographers, Robert M. Henderson, First National was interested only in the Griffith imprimatur and permitted him to leave the direction of these films to his assistants, which he apparently did. *The Greatest Question* (1919), a melodrama about spiritualism, and *The Idol Dancer* (1920; released 1922) and *The Love Flower* (1920), both exotic South Seas adventures, were of indifferent quality and did little to enhance the reputation of "the Master," as Griffith had recently been dubbed by the press. Between *The Greatest Question* and *The Idol Dancer*, however, Griffith independently produced *Broken Blossoms*, his last masterpiece and his first great commercial success since *The Birth of a Nation*.

Based on a story called "The Chink and the Child," from Thomas Burke's *Limehouse Nights* (1916), *Broken Blossoms* concerns a young waif of the London slums,

(right) Lillian Gish in *Broken Blossoms* (1919).





Lillian Gish in *Way Down East* (1920).

brutally mistreated by her father, who finds brief sanctuary in the chaste love of a gentle young Chinese man. When her father learns of the relationship, he beats the child to death with a whip handle; the boy then kills the father and commits suicide. Griffith shot this film entirely in the studio in eighteen days (with much prior rehearsal, however) on such a rigorously economical schedule that—according to Lillian Gish, who played the girl—there were no retakes and only 200 feet of printed stock were left unused (the normal ratio of footage printed to footage used in a commercial film was about 15 to 1 in 1919 and is 10 to 1 today).

Yet *Broken Blossoms* shows no evidence of its hasty construction and is simultaneously Griffith's most richly evocative and tightly controlled film. Despite some overly sentimental touches, *Broken Blossoms* succeeds admirably as pathos and is probably the closest Griffith ever came to incarnating his Victorian sensibilities in an appropriate dramatic form. Even more important than its dramatic structure is the film's dreamlike, atmospheric context—its mood-drenched mise-en-scène. Griffith derived the film's ambiance from a series of watercolors of London's Limehouse district, the city's Chinatown, by the English artist George Baker; but both photography and lighting in *Broken Blossoms* are distinctly Continental, probably because of the efforts of Billy Bitzer's recently acquired assistant, Hendrik Sartov, a specialist in mood lighting and soft-focus, or "impressionistic," photography. Griffith, Bitzer, and Sartov together created out of brooding London fogs, smoke-filled opium dens, and the petal-like delicacy of the boy's rooms a mise-en-scène worthy of—and probably contributory to—the studio-produced *Kammerspielfilm* of the German cinema.

Unpredictably, the film was a smashing commercial and critical success. Produced for the now modest sum of $90,000, it made nearly $1 million and was widely hailed as a masterpiece. There are indications that the chief appeal of *Broken Blossoms* to contemporary audiences was nostalgic. Whether Griffith understood this is unclear, but it is certain that the resounding accolades for his film convinced him more than ever before that he was a natural genius who could do no wrong on the screen.

Broken Blossoms was released through United Artists Corporation, the producing-distributing company that Griffith had formed with Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks in the spring of 1919, and the film's financial success made it possible

for Griffith to equip his own studio at Mamaroneck as planned. His first project there was an adaptation of a creaky Victorian stage play of seduction and betrayal, *Way Down East*, the rights for which he paid $175,000. Once again Griffith was emotionally in tune with his material, and he produced an exciting and credible melodrama. Shot on location in New York, Connecticut, and Vermont, *Way Down East* (1920) possesses an unexpectedly cinematic vitality and concludes with a skillfully edited last-minute rescue equal to Griffith's best montage work of the teens. After an elaborate chase through a real blizzard, the heroine collapses on an ice floe moving rapidly downriver toward a steep falls (actually Niagara, cut into the sequence from stock shots). The hero emerges from the storm, leaps downstream from one floe to another, and finally rescues her on the very brink of the plunging falls in a sequence that most certainly influenced Pudovkin's ice-floe montage at the conclusion of *Mother* (1926; see Chapter 5, pp. 112–114). The audiences, if not the critics, were enthusiastic about *Way Down East* and made it Griffith's last great popular success. In fact, the film grossed $4.5 million, returning the largest profit of any Griffith film after *The Birth of a Nation*.

Decline

Griffith took his share of the profits and plowed it back into his Mamaroneck studios, but he knew that the days of independent producing were rapidly drawing to a close. There is evidence that with this knowledge, he was driven to consider filmmaking more and more as a business activity and less and less as an art. His next several films confirmed this new preoccupation. *Dream Street* (1921) was a misbegotten effort to re-create the misty, poetic ambiance that had proved so lucrative with *Broken Blossoms*. *Orphans of the Storm* (1921) was a spectacular attempt to capitalize on the new vogue for historical costume films created by Ernst Lubitsch's *Madame DuBarry* (English title: *Passion*, 1919) by setting a dated Victorian melodrama against the background of the French Revolution. The film was expensively produced at Mamaroneck and well received by the critics, but it lost so much money that it nearly terminated Griffith's dream of independence. In an effort to recoup his losses, he made two more potboilers—a haunted-house mystery titled *One Exciting Night* (1922) and an old-fashioned piece of Deep South exoticism called *The White Rose* (1923). Both films were failures that served only to deepen Griffith's financial crisis.

Now Griffith began to dream of saving his company by duplicating the phenomenal success of *The Birth of a Nation*. He remembered *War*, the drama of the American Revolution that he had written years before he had ever seen a movie, and decided to produce an epic film on the subject. This costly attempt to remake *The Birth of a Nation* in other terms was called *America* (1924), and it succeeded admirably as spectacle. Its enormous battle scenes easily rivaled anything Griffith ever produced, but its dull textbook account of the Revolution and its heavy-handed patriotism made it a museum piece even in its own time.

Like every film he had made since *The Love Flower* except *Way Down East*, *America* lost money, and the Mamaroneck studios were doomed. Griffith was now facing extinction as a producer and was simultaneously being squeezed for more films by his United Artists partners. Accordingly, in the summer of 1924, he traveled to Germany to make *Isn't Life Wonderful?*—his last film as an independent producer for United Artists. Based on contemporary events, with exteriors shot entirely on location, the film is a semi-documentary account of the ravages of postwar inflation on the German middle class. It is thought to have influenced both G. W. Pabst's *Die freudlose Gasse* (*The Joyless Street*), made in Germany the following year, and the neorealist cinema that sprang up in Italy after World War II.

Zukor had just lost Cecil B. DeMille as his premier director, and he promptly hired Griffith for the job, which meant that for the first time since his early Biograph days, Griffith was unable to choose his own material. The apathy this produced in him was very nearly fatal. At Paramount's Astoria, New York, studios, he made two limp W. C. Fields vehicles, *Sally of the Sawdust* (1925) and *That Royle Girl* (1925), and a studio-contrived fantasy spectacle, *The Sorrows of Satan* (1926), which had originally been intended for DeMille, but his direction of these unappealing projects was so pedestrian that his Paramount contract was not renewed when it expired in late 1926.

At this point, Joseph Schenck (1878–1961), now president of United Artists, offered Griffith a job directing films for his independently owned Art Cinema Corporation, in exchange for the voting rights to Griffith's United Artists stock. For Art Cinema, Griffith made three undistinguished films—*Drums of Love* (1928), a medieval Italian melodrama based on the Paolo and Francesca legend; *The Battle of the Sexes* (1928–1929), a humorless remake of his old



Reliance-Majestic farce with a synchronized sound-on-film score; and *Lady of the Pavements* (1929), a romantic "women's picture," released in both silent and sound versions.

Schenck was ready to fire Griffith (who, in addition to his other worries, had developed a drinking problem) when Griffith proposed that he direct a sound-film biography of Abraham Lincoln. The old *Birth of a Nation* mystique worked for Griffith one last time, and Schenck approved the project. The resulting film, *Abraham Lincoln* (1930), with a script by the American poet Stephen Vincent Benét, is a shadow of Griffith's great Civil War epic.

But Griffith had turned in a respectable and intelligent film in the most difficult years of the transition from silent pictures to sound, and he was rewarded for it. Several influential trade journals named him "Director of the Year," and the film itself was on most "Ten Best" lists for 1930.

Griffith now felt that he was one film away from complete rehabilitation, but knew he could never make that film working for Schenck, so he quit Art Cinema and got a bank loan of approximately $200,000 to produce what he hoped would be his first sound-era masterpiece—a version of Zola's *L'assommoir* (*The Drunkard*), written by Anita Loos and titled *The Struggle* (1931). It turned out, instead, to be his last film. Thinly capitalized and shot for reasons of economy in semi-documentary fashion in and around New York City, *The Struggle* was an abject failure with both the contemporary critics and the public. Like all Griffith films, it was visually impressive and had a sound track that was far above the average quality of its time. The film was released in January 1932, then permanently withdrawn after a week of exhibition: audiences had walked out on its opening night, and critics were mocking it (although today, some regard it as a much better film than *Abraham Lincoln*). Sixteen years after *The Birth of a Nation*, "the Shakespeare of the screen" had become a figure of ridicule, and Griffith was forced to retire in humiliation from the industry that he, more than any single figure in its brief history, had helped to create. He lived out the remainder of his life in modest comfort on an annuity he had purchased during more prosperous times, and by overseeing retrospective exhibitions of his greatest films and attending testimonial banquets in his honor. He died in Los Angeles in 1948 (only five months after Sergei Eisenstein in Moscow) and was eulogized around the world as "the man who invented cinema."

(left) Lillian and Dorothy Gish in *Orphans of the Storm* (1921).

The Importance of Griffith

Griffith remained until the end the same paradoxical figure he had been since the beginning. To borrow Jay Leyda's terminology for *Intolerance*, the greatness and the cheapness of the man were inextricably mixed. By his own candid admission, Griffith derived most of his major narrative innovations from the techniques of nineteenth-century fiction and melodrama, as well as the simplistic worldview of these two popular forms, to the everlasting detriment of his art. In his famous essay titled "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today," Sergei Eisenstein points out that Griffith's constant resort to parallel editing was a function of his dualistic vision of human experience in which an entire civil war, or twenty centuries of human history, were reducible to a melodramatic struggle between the forces of Good and Evil. But Griffith was also perhaps the greatest cinematic genius in history: the man who discovered (sometimes, admittedly, in the work of others), synthesized, and articulated the narrative language of film as it is practiced even today. In effect, the way he structured the cinema is the way most of us still perceive it.

His genius was fundamentally innovative and intuitive, rather than critical or analytic. When the days of innovation ceased, and intuition was no longer essential to the filmmaking process, Griffith was thrown back upon a worldview that was hopelessly inappropriate to the postwar era. To compound the misfortune, the lionization of Griffith that followed *The Birth of a Nation* and continued well into the 1920s produced in him a kind of megalomania that permanently impaired his judgment. When Griffith began to think of himself as the prophet and philosopher of the film medium, he ceased to be its leading artist. Yet he achieved so much in so short a time with such limited means that to dwell on the defects of his work or his character is simply irrelevant, for the greatest of Griffith's achievements in a lifetime of achievements was that this nineteenth-century man ultimately managed to transcend his limitations of vision, judgment, and taste to become one of the great artists of the twentieth century.



Alfred Abel, Rudolf Klein-Rogge, and Brigitte Helm in costume in *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927).



04

German Cinema of the Weimar Period, 1919–1929

The Prewar Period

Prior to World War I, German cinema had reached a less advanced state of development than the cinemas of France, Italy, England, and the United States. Although the Skladanowsky brothers had unveiled their Bioskop projector in the Berlin Wintergarten in November 1895, almost simultaneously with the first Lumière Cinématographe projection, an indigenous German film industry had somehow failed to evolve in the fifteen years that followed.

Early German or Wilhelmine cinema (after Kaiser Wilhelm) was very much a "cinema of attractions," in Tom Gunning's sense; many domestic films were frankly pornographic, and few demonstrated narrative integration. Around 1910, however, in response to the great success of the French *film d'art* movement, directors, actors, and writers associated with the German theater began to take a serious interest in the cinema for the first time.

In 1912, the first *Autorenfilm* ("famous author's film," and thus the German version of *film d'art*) was brought to the screen by the former stage director Max Mack (1884–1973). This static adaptation of Paul Lindau's highly successful stage play *Der Andere* (*The Other*), about the split personality of a Berlin lawyer,



Der Student von Prag (*The Student of Prague*; Stellan Rye, 1913).

starred the world-famous actor Albert Bassermann (1867–1952). The influx of literary and theatrical people into German film had the effect of radically elevating its social status, but, as in France, the movement also retarded the development of true cinematic narrative by binding it tightly to the narrative conventions of the stage.

The first prewar German film to break with stage conventions was the Danish director Stellan Rye's production of *Der Student von Prag* (*The Student of Prague*, 1913), shot by the pioneering lighting cameraman Guido Seeber (1879–1940) and starring a former Reinhardt actor, Paul Wegener (1874–1948), in the title role. Based on variants of the Faust legend, the film concerns a young student who sells his mirror reflection, and thus his soul, to a sorcerer who in turn causes the image to become a murderous incarnation of the student's evil second self. As a tale of psychological horror in a specifically supernatural setting, *Der Student von Prag* prefigures the German Expressionist cinema, which began in earnest after the war. Indeed, the film was itself remade in 1926 in the Expressionist manner by some of its original collaborators.

The Founding of UFA

The first major step to increase the quantity and improve the quality of German film production was the establishment of the nationally subsidized conglomerate Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft (UFA) by government decree in 1917. On December 18, 1917, aware of the depressed state of the domestic industry and the growing number of effective anti-German propaganda films emanating from the Allied countries, General Erich Ludendorff, commander in chief of the German army, ordered the merger of the main German production companies (as well as exhibitors and distributors) into a single unit to make and market high-quality nationalistic films to enhance Germany's image at home and abroad. Huge new studios were built at Neubabelsberg, near Berlin, and UFA immediately set about the task of upgrading production, distribution, and exhibition by assembling a team of first-rate producers, directors, writers, and technicians.

Perhaps the best comment on the organization's effectiveness in this regard is that by the end of the war, German production facilities were ten times larger than they had been at the outset, the feature film had been institutionalized as the dominant form, and the German film industry was ready to compete commercially with that of any other nation in the world. For a brief time during the 1920s, it became the only industry to successfully compete with Hollywood in foreign markets, including the American. When the war ended in a German defeat in November 1918, the government sold its shares in the company to the Deutsche Bank and to corporations such as Krupp and I. G. Farben, and UFA was transformed into a private company—the largest cartel in Germany.

Germany's crushing defeat resulted in a complete rejection of the past by much of its intelligentsia and a new enthusiasm for the progressive, experimental, and avant-garde. A liberal democratic republic, culturally centered at Weimar, was established. Marxism became intellectually respectable for the first time in German history, **Expressionism** became prominent in the arts, and in early 1919, the Council of People's Representatives abolished military censorship. In this creatively charged atmosphere, the last shreds of intellectual resistance to the cinema disappeared, and Germany's radical young artists were ready to accept it as a new means of communicating with the masses.

UFA's first peacetime productions were lavish costume dramas (*Kostümfilme*), initially made to compete with Italian spectacles such as *Quo vadis?* and *Cabiria*. Joe May's *Veritas vincit* (1918), an oversized drama about the transmigration of souls through three different historical ages, probably established the conventions of the *Kostümfilm* genre, but Ernst Lubitsch

(right) Pola Negri in *Madame DuBarry* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1919).

(1892–1947) was to become its master. Lubitsch had worked as an actor for Max Reinhardt and had directed a popular series of short comedies before coming to UFA in 1918. That year, he directed the Polish actress Pola Negri (1894–1987) in two lush costume films, *Die Augen der Mumie Ma* (*The Eyes of the Mummy Ma*) and *Carmen* (English title: *Gypsy Blood*), both of which were successful enough for Lubitsch and his producer, Paul Davidson, to attempt a third in 1919. This was *Madame DuBarry* (English title: *Passion*), a story of the French Revolution, which became an international success and launched the famous series of historical pageants that we now consider the first part of Lubitsch's career.

In rapid succession, Lubitsch directed *Anna Boleyn* (English title: *Deception*, 1920), *Das Weib des Pharao* (*The Loves of Pharaoh*, 1922), and *Sumurun* (*One Arabian Night*, 1921). These historical films were distinguished technically by his dynamic handling of crowd scenes and his brilliant use of artificial lighting, both of which he seems to have learned from Reinhardt. He also made innovative use of camera angles and rapid cutting, which impressed American critics as "revolutionary." Lubitsch's technical virtuosity was the first of its kind the German screen had witnessed, and this expertise, coupled with his painstakingly accurate rendition of period detail in film after film, made Lubitsch's spectacles among the most popular of the postwar years—not only in Germany, but all over the world. Significantly, their popularity in Germany died out in 1924, the year that witnessed the rise of an unabashedly nihilistic **realism** in the triumph of the *Kammerspielfilm*, as will be discussed in a later section. Until this occurred, however, it was not the historical spectacle, but another type of film entirely that was to dominate the German cinema.



Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari

In late 1918, a Czech poet, Hans Janowitz, and a young Austrian artist named Carl Mayer, who would later become one of the most influential creative figures of the Weimar cinema, collaborated in writing a scenario based on certain shared experiences of psychic phenomena and mysterious coincidence, as well as a bizarre sex slaying in Hamburg known personally to Janowitz. In it, a strange mountebank named Dr. Caligari comes to the north German town of Holstenwall with a traveling fair. His "act" consists of interrogating an apparently hypnotized somnambulist named Cesare, who can forecast the future. Shortly after their arrival, a series of brutal, inexplicable murders is committed in Holstenwall, which the young student Francis later discovers to be the work of Cesare, done at the evil Caligari's bidding. Francis gives the alarm and pursues Caligari into the countryside and finally to his refuge in a state insane asylum, where, it turns out, the showman is not an inmate, but the director. Papers found in his study indicate that the director had become obsessed with a homicidal eighteenth-century hypnotist named Caligari to the point of assuming his identity and causing one of his own patients (Cesare) to commit murders for him. Confronted with this proof, the director goes mad and must be incarcerated in his own asylum. The script, titled *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*)—a reference to the



Conrad Veidt (Cesare) and Lil Dagover in *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*; Robert Wiene, 1919): Cesare carries his victim over the rooftops of Holstenwall.

coffinlike box in which Cesare is kept by his master—was clearly antiauthoritarian, if not subversive, in its equation of power and madness.

Nevertheless, when Janowitz and Mayer submitted the scenario to Erich Pommer (1889–1966), chief executive of Decla-Bioskop (an independent production company that was to merge with UFA in 1921), it was immediately accepted. Whether Pommer grasped the script's radical nature is unclear, but he certainly saw in it an opportunity to upgrade the artistic content of his studio's films. The young Austrian director Fritz Lang was initially assigned to the project but was replaced by the more experienced Robert Wiene (1880–1938), with the result that the production design of *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* became strikingly experimental under Wiene's direction.

Wiene hired three prominent Expressionist artists—Hermann Warm, Walter Röhrig, and Walter Reimann—to design and paint the sets for the film, which were to embody the tortured state of the narrator's psyche. The visual world of *Caligari* is a highly stylized one of exaggerated dimensions and deranged spatial relationships—an unnatural, sunless place in which buildings pile on top of one another at impossible angles, jagged chimneys reach insanely into the sky, and the very flesh of its inhabitants seems frozen under pounds of makeup.

The decision to use artificial backdrops was pragmatic, as well as thematically appropriate, because in the economic recession that immediately followed the war, the film studios, like all other German industries, were allocated electric power on a quota basis. In a film such as *Caligari* that required many dramatic lighting effects, it was cheaper and more convenient to simply paint light and shadow onto the scenery itself than to produce the effect electrically. Nevertheless, the angular distortion of the sets was clearly intended by Wiene to provide an objective correlative for the narrator's insanity, and for this reason *Caligari* became the progenitor and exemplar of German Expressionist cinema.

The classic study of this cinema, written by Lotte H. Eisner, is titled *The Haunted Screen*, and the screen of German Expressionism was indeed a haunted one, but its terrors were those of morbid psychological states and troubled dreams, rather than the more concrete horrors that Hollywood's Universal Studios was to offer in the 1930s (although Universal's horror films were the lineal descendants of Expressionism, created in many cases by the same artists). The nightmarishly distorted decor of German Expressionist films and



Werner Krauss (Caligari), Conrad Veidt (Cesare), and Lil Dagover (prey) in *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*; Robert Wiene, 1919); chemically tinted in the original prints.

their creation of *Stimmung* ("mood") through shifting **chiaroscuro** lighting were *expressive* of the disturbed mental and emotional states they sought to portray.

Thus, the creators of *Caligari* and its successors made a deliberate effort to portray subjective realities in objective terms, to render not simply narratives, but states of mind, moods, and atmosphere, through the medium of the photographic image (a task more difficult than Expressionist representation in the other arts, because there is seemingly nothing more objective than a photographic image but the object itself). German Expressionism, then, attempted to express interior realities through the means of exterior realities, or to treat subjective states in what was widely regarded at the time as a purely objective medium of representation. This was perhaps as radical an innovation for the cinema as Porter's elaboration of the shot, because it added a nonnarrative and poetic dimension to what had been, even in the hands of Griffith, an almost wholly narrative medium.

Caligari had little direct impact on the course of other national cinemas. Yet in terms of its set design, its psychological probing and thematic ambiguity, its sinister and morbid subject matter, and above all, its attempt to render the internal and subjective through the external and objective, *Calgari* had an immense influence on the German films that followed it.

The production of *Caligari* marked the beginning of German cinema's great decade. This era was to be characterized by films that, like *Caligari*, were completely studio-made and were admired all over the world. The emphasis on studio production seems to have stemmed less from economic considerations, as it did in Hollywood, than from aesthetic ones. German directors found that they could exercise complete authority over every aspect of the filmmaking process when they worked in the controlled environment of the studio, as they could not when they worked on location. In terms of narrative, however, *Caligari* was extremely conservative; its expressiveness was fundamentally a matter of decor and staging.

Constructed on the vast back lots of the UFA studio at Neubabelsberg, which offered some 40,000 square meters for exteriors alone, mountains, forests, cities, and entire ages were all re-created with such astonishing fidelity that the critic Paul Rotha coined the term *studio constructivism* to characterize "that curious air of completeness, of finality, that surrounds each product of the German studios." The "realistic" *Kammerspielfilm*, no less than the aggressively artificial Expressionist film, profited aesthetically from the large measure of control that studio production permitted a director, and the great cinema of the Weimar Republic could almost certainly not have existed without it.

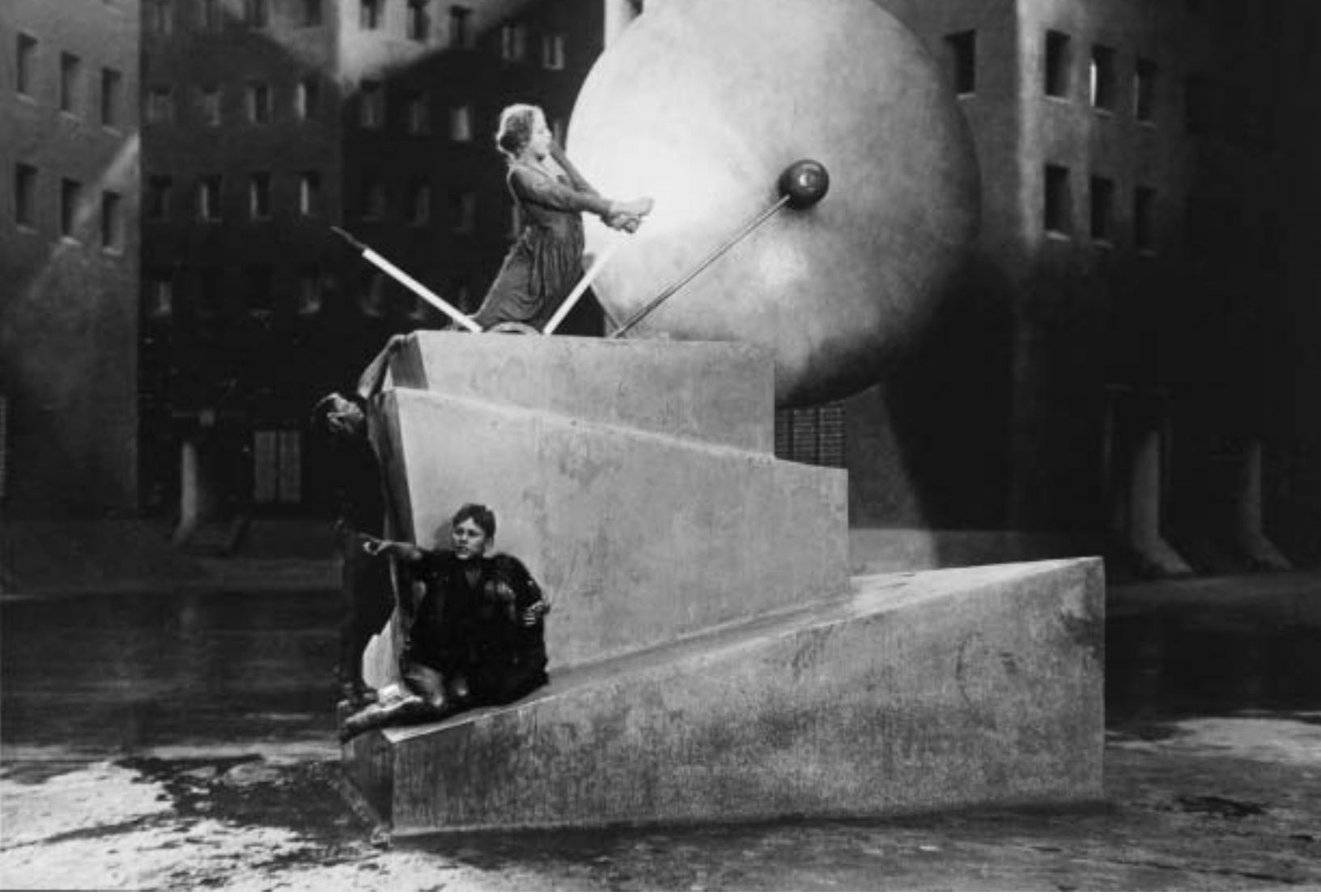
Fritz Lang

Fritz Lang (1890–1976) had already directed several feature films and serials when he and his wife, the scriptwriter Thea von Harbou (1888–1954), collaborated in the production of *Der müde Tod* (*Destiny*, 1921) for UFA. The film is a romantic allegory, set in the Middle Ages, about a girl whose lover is snatched away by Death himself. She seeks out this figure and demands her lover's return, but Death refuses and instead offers her three fantastic narratives in which lovers attempt unsuccessfully to triumph over Death. Some critics see *Der müde Tod* as a manifestation of Germany's postwar obsession with doom and *Götterdämmerung*, the logical culmination of the cultural pessimism of the late nineteenth century, and certainly the film's relationship to the main thematic concerns of Expressionism is clear. Lang added something new to the cinema, however, in his striking use of lighting to emphasize architectural line and space.

Lang had been trained as an architect, and he was to carry over his facility for stylized architectural composition, as opposed to a purely graphic Expressionism, into his other major films of the silent period. These were not intellectualized works in the manner of, say, *Caligari*, but they were all



Die Nibelungen: Siegfried (Fritz Lang, 1924; art direction by Otto Hunte, Erich Kettelhut, and Karl Vollbrecht): geometrical stylization of space.



Brigette Helm (on top) in *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927).

overwhelmingly impressive in terms of sheer plastic beauty and decorative design. *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* (*Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler*, 1922), for example, offers an Expressionistic treatment of a Caligariesque master criminal who is intent on destroying the fabric of a postwar society, whose rottenness clearly warrants it. In *Die Nibelungen: Siegfried* (1922–1924) and *Kriemhilds Rache* (*Kriemhild's Revenge*, 1923–1924), Lang again exercised his penchant for legendary romance and compositional majesty in a massive retelling of the old Norse and Teutonic Nibelungen saga, complete with studio-constructed mountains, forests, and a full-scale fire-breathing dragon.

Finally, in his last major silent film, *Metropolis* (1926; released 1927), Lang presented a terrifying, if simplistic, vision of a futuristic totalitarian society whose architecture and technology were rendered brilliantly concrete through the process and model work of the special-effects photographer Eugen Schüfftan. (Lang claimed that *Metropolis* was inspired by his first vision of the New York City skyline, from the deck of the SS *Deutschland* in October 1924, at night.)

For *Metropolis*, Schüfftan invented the trick-shot technique, still universally used and known today as the **Schüfftan process**, which works as follows: miniatures are reflected onto a glass with a magnifying mirrored surface, which is placed at a 45-degree angle relative to the camera lens. This surface is scraped away from the areas in which live action is to take place, leaving holes behind which the actual sets are constructed and lit to correspond with the lighting of the model. *Metropolis*, like all of Lang's Expressionist work, highlights the fact that the phenomenon was in many ways an art-film movement predicated on special effects, as well as on decor and lighting. In this regard, German Expressionism stands at the beginning of a long line of films, extending into the digital era, whose ability to manipulate photographed reality in real time gives them their unique power.

F. W. Murnau and the *Kammerspielfilm*

The second major figure to emerge from the Expressionist movement was F. W. (Friedrich Wilhelm) Murnau (1888–1931), whose highly stylized vampire film *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* (*Nosferatu, a Symphony of Horrors*, 1922) has become a classic of the **genre**. Trained as an art historian, Murnau became fascinated by the theater and began to write for films shortly after the war, collaborating with both Carl Mayer and Hans Janowitz. When he began to direct his own films, Murnau worked almost exclusively in the Expressionist vein, making films such as *Nosferatu*, adapted loosely (and without credit) by Henrik Galeen from Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897).

One of the remarkable things about *Nosferatu* is the apparent naturalness of its stylization, achieved, it should be noted, with a minimum of resources, because the film was independently produced. Like the Scandinavian directors whose films flooded Germany during the war, Murnau had an affinity for landscapes, and he had most of *Nosferatu* shot on location in Central Europe by the great cinematographer Fritz Arno Wagner, whose specialty was a kind of low-contrast, realistic photography that exchanged stark black and white for a whole range of intermediate grays.

While the film is essentially a thriller and is more than a bit creaky in terms of narrative structure, it nonetheless provides a succession of haunting visual images more authentically "expressive" of horror than those of *Caligari*. Whereas *Caligari*'s Expressionism was mainly graphic, *Nosferatu*'s is almost purely cinematic, relying on camera angles, lighting, and editing, rather than on production design. Nosferatu, the vampire king, is frequently photographed from an extremely low angle, which renders him gigantic and monstrously sinister. A number of these shots are lit so that the vampire's vast and angular shadow is cast across every object in the frame. Many of the film's images are strikingly composed in depth, with action sharply in focus in the foreground, the middle ground, and the background simultaneously. This mode of composing the frame has the effect of integrating character and landscape, and much of *Nosferatu*'s "naturalness" derives from it.

Composition in depth also produces some memorable expressive effects. Near the film's conclusion, its heroine, who is situated in the foreground of the frame, gazes through her window at a mass funeral procession for the vampire's victims, which is shot so that it seems to stretch away endlessly from the middle ground to infinity, suggesting the enormity of Nosferatu's crimes.



Shadow of Max Schreck as the vampire in *Nosferatu* (F. W. Murnau, 1922).

Murnau's next important film was made in the genre that superseded Expressionism—that of the *Kammerspiel* (literally, "intimate theater"), or "instinct," film. The scriptwriter Carl Mayer, of *Caligari* fame, was the founder and chief practitioner of this genre, which dealt realistically with the oppressiveness of contemporary lower-middle-class life and, by extension, with the irresistibility of fate in a disintegrating society. Mayer began writing *Kammerspiel* scripts in the heyday of Expressionism, and there is no question that they contain Expressionist elements. Indeed, the whole realistic cinema that grew out of the *Kammerspielfilm* can be seen as both an extension of, and a reaction against, Expressionist cinema, in that it retained the morbid psychological themes of the earlier films but cast them in realistic form. It was *Der letzte Mann* (literally, "The Last Man," but usually titled *The Last Laugh* in English) that inaugurated the type and began a new period of German realism in 1924.

Der letzte Mann, produced by Erich Pommer for UFA, is a distinguished film in every respect and an extremely important one in terms of the enormous influence it exercised, especially on German and American cinema. The script by Mayer, the acting by Emil Jannings (1884–1950), and the production design

(right) Emil Jannings is down and out in *Der letzte Mann* (*The Last Laugh*; F. W. Murnau, 1924).

by Walter Röhrig and Robert Herlth are all impressive, but it is the innovative use of camera movement that makes *Der letzte Mann* so important to the history of film, and this was achieved largely by Murnau and his cinematographer, Karl Freund. It was Mayer who suggested that the camera be put into nearly continuous motion (the "unchained camera," he called it), and he specified its involvement in the action in his script. Freund, however, was responsible for the brilliant tactical maneuvering that permitted this movement, and Murnau, of course, directed it.

Like all *Kammerspielfilme, Der letzte Mann* has a fairly simple plot. It is also unrelievedly grim until the sudden appearance of a happy ending, which is emotionally satisfying in a primitive sort of way but wholly out of key with what has happened earlier. The film concerns an aging doorman (Jannings) in a fashionable Berlin hotel who loses his job and, more important, his resplendent uniform to a younger man. Within the lower-middle-class tenement where he lives with his daughter, the uniform has brought him prestige and dignity; its unexpected loss elicits a kind of furious ridicule from his neighbors that is chillingly sadistic. Demoted to the position of washroom attendant at the hotel and utterly humiliated in his own home, the old man begins to come apart. He becomes stoop-shouldered and slovenly overnight; he gets ragingly drunk at his daughter's wedding and experiences delusions of persecution; he even makes a desperate attempt to steal his uniform back out of a hotel locker.

As the film nears its conclusion, we discover him crouched furtively against the wall of the hotel lavatory like a trapped beast, terrified of the entire world outside himself and apparently as mad as Caligari. There follows a farcical conclusion in which he inherits a vast sum of money by an outlandish coincidence and shows up in the hotel dining room to flaunt his wealth before his former employers in a grandly vulgar but good-natured manner. It is thought that this contrived ending was tacked onto the film either to pander to the American audience's taste for such sentimental optimism or to parody it; no one is quite sure which.

Der letzte Mann was the most technically innovative film to come out of Weimar cinema. Prior to it, most camera movement had consisted of panning and tilting from a fixed tripod. With several significant exceptions (in the films of Griffith and the Italian film *Cabiria* [1914]), there had been little sustained *tracking* movement—that is, movement in which the whole camera apparatus participates, either to follow another moving object or to isolate a static one by moving in close on it. What is necessary to achieve this kind of fluidity



is a *dolly*—a small wheeled cart on which to mount the camera during shooting and that may or may not use tracks (thus, "tracking"). Today, the **boom** crane and a variety of sophisticated dollies (as well as Steadicams) are available to permit such freedom, but these devices could only be improvised in 1924. Griffith, of course, had put his camera in the back of an automobile to follow the motion of the chase in *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*, and he had used an elevator tower that rolled on rails to track his machine into the gigantic set of Belshazzar's feast in *Intolerance*. Other American directors had improvised dollies in order to follow the movement of actors within a scene without cutting. Yet *Der letzte Mann* was the first film in history to move its camera backward and forward, as well as up and down and from side to side, in scenes of substantial duration.

These are scenes held for a single shot and kept alive almost solely through camera movement, rather than scenes built up out of a number of separate shots and kept alive through editing, as in the work of Griffith and Eisenstein. In the opening sequence, for example, we ride via the camera down the hotel elevator, move through the bustling lobby, approach the revolving door (a major symbol of life's randomness in the film—a sort of existential roulette wheel), and come to focus on the doorman on the sidewalk in what appears to be a single unbroken shot (there is actually a discrete cut in the middle of the track through the lobby).

The film is replete with shots like this, and their accomplishment was by no means simple in the absence of modern cranes and dollies. For the shot just described, Freund mounted his camera on a bicycle in the descending elevator, rolled it out into the lobby, and tracked it several hundred feet to the revolving door. In other shots, the camera rode the ladder of a fire truck, anticipating the boom crane, and traveled on overhead cables. Indeed, Freund's camera seems to move almost continuously throughout *Der letzte Mann*, although there are actually many shots taken with the camera at full rest that provide an appropriate counterpoint for the others.

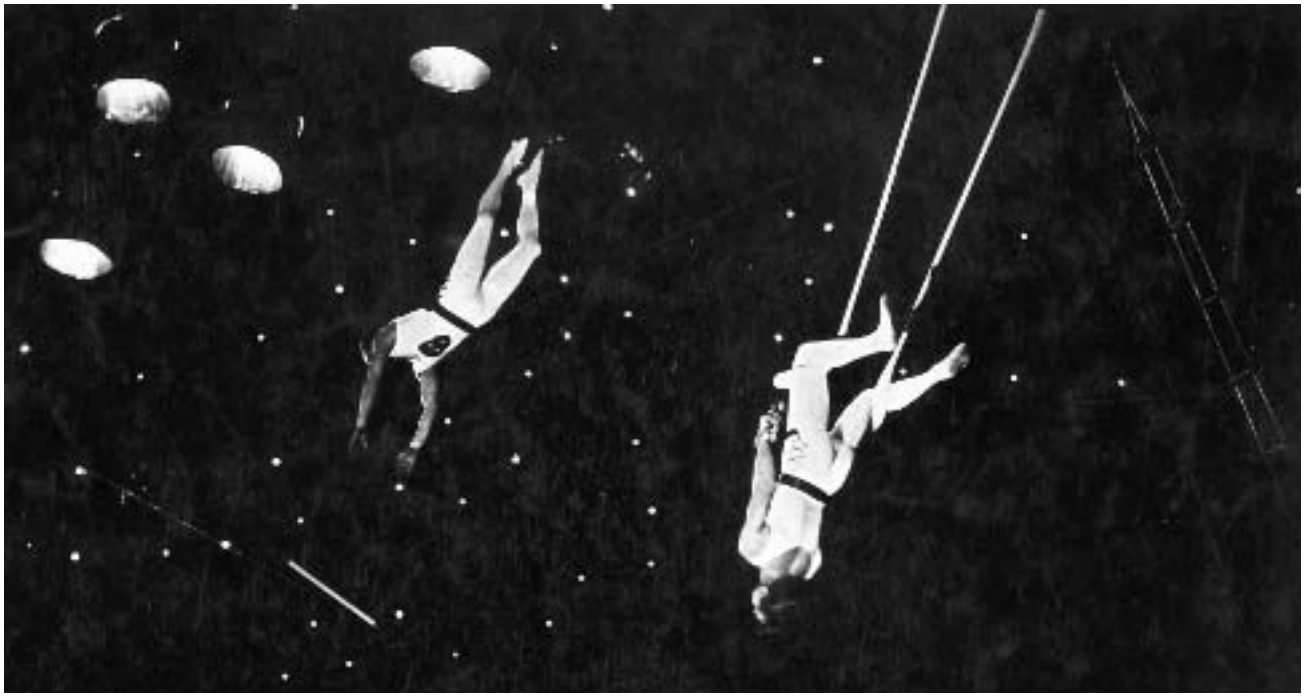
Yet of equal importance with the camera mobility achieved by Murnau and Freund was their use of the subjective camera—the technique whereby the camera lens becomes the eyes of a player in the film, usually the protagonist, so that the audience sees only what he or she sees and only from his or her angle of vision. These "motivated point-of-view" shots, in combination with the eyeline match, were brought to a state of extreme refinement by the UFA director G. W. Pabst later in the 1920s. Few filmmakers before Murnau and Freund, however, had understood the full range of possibilities inherent in the subjective camera and the way it might be used to create multiple perspectives on a single narrative.

The most famous subjective camera shot in *Der letzte Mann* occurs in the scene in which the doorman gets drunk in his apartment and sits down, while the room seems to spin wildly about him. To render the character's point of view at this moment, Freund strapped a lightweight camera to his chest and stumbled drunkenly about the room. This is a fairly typical and straightforward use of the technique, but in *Der letzte Mann* the camera is subjective in another sense, too, a sense that demonstrates the roots of German realism in Expressionism. Quite frequently, in addition to assuming the position of the doorman's *physical eye*, the camera assumes the position of his *mind's eye* as well. During the same drunken scene, he feels acutely humiliated at the loss of his job and his prestigious uniform, and he later dreams himself to be the object of ridicule and scorn that he will in fact become on the following day, when his misfortune becomes known to all. At the height of his despair in the dream sequence, we see on the screen not the doorman (as with the "objective camera"), but a visual embodiment of what he *feels*—a long lap-dissolved montage of malicious laughing faces in close-up.

Earlier, after he steals his old uniform and runs out of the hotel into the street, the doorman looks back at the building, which seems to tremble and sway as if about to fall and crush him. There is also a dream sequence, shot with distorting mirrors, in which the porter imagines himself to be possessed of supernatural strength and bounces a large footlocker in the air like a balloon. We might say, then, that Murnau shows his Expressionist roots by using the subjective camera in a highly expressive way—to embody the morbid psychological state of his protagonist in terms of visual images.

Thus, while *Der letzte Mann* is simple in terms of plot, it has an extremely elaborate structure in which the narrative point of view is in constant rotation between the third-person objective camera and the two modes of first-person subjective camera. As Murnau's biographer Lotte H. Eisner puts it, "It was the almost universal decision of Hollywood that this was the greatest picture ever made." Murnau was to leave Germany for a Hollywood career after completing two final super-productions for UFA (*Tartuffe*, 1925; *Faust*, 1926).

Hollywood was to be almost equally impressed the following year with *Der letzte Mann*'s immediate successor, E. A. (Ewald André) Dupont's (1891–1956) *Varieté* (1925), also produced by Erich Pommer for UFA and photographed by Karl Freund. The film deals with



Varieté (E. A. Dupont, 1925).

a love triangle among trapeze artists (Emil Jannings, Lya De Putti, and Warwick Ward) at the Berlin Wintergarten that ends in murder, and it contains camera movement even more breathlessly dynamic than that of *Der letzte Mann*. In almost documentary fashion, Freund's camera penetrates everywhere the human eye can go. It darts frenetically from face to face in a crowded room; it flies through the air with the acrobats, focusing subjectively on the swaying audience below; and at one point it seems to plummet to the floor of the Wintergarten as a performer falls to his death. *Varieté* ensured the permanence of German influence on the Hollywood studios until the end of the silent era, and in Germany, it provided a bridge between the introspective *Kammerspiel* genre and a more objective kind of realism that was to emerge after 1924.

The Parufamet Agreement and the Migration to Hollywood

In 1924, the German mark had been stabilized by the Dawes plan (named for the American financier Charles G. Dawes, who presided over an international committee set up to monitor Germany's war reparations payments). This provided for the long-term payment of reparations and admitted Germany back into the economic system of the Allies. Ironically, however, the German film industry, which had survived rampant postwar inflation, was seriously threatened by stabilization because the Dawes plan stipulated the curtailment of all exports, including motion pictures.

By late 1925, UFA was on the brink of collapse, due to external conditions and to the extravagance of its own recent productions, having lost more than $8 million in the fiscal year just ended. The American studios Paramount and MGM offered to subsidize UFA's huge debt to the Deutsche Bank by lending it $4 million at 7.5 percent interest, in exchange for collaborative rights to UFA studios, theaters, and personnel—an arrangement that clearly worked in the American companies' favor.

The result was the foundation of the Parufamet (Paramount–UFA–Metro) Distribution Company in early 1926. Within a year, however, UFA was showing losses of $12 million and was forced to seek another loan, this time from the Prussian financier Dr. Alfred Hugenberg (1865–1951), a director of Krupp and a leader of the right-wing German National Party (Deutschnationalen Volkspartei, or DNVP). Hugenberg subsequently bought out the American

companies and became chairman of the UFA board in March 1927. Without fanfare, he established a nationalistic production policy that gave increasing prominence to Nazi Party rallies in UFA newsreels and that finally permitted the Nazis to subvert the German film industry in 1933. While the republic survived, however, Hugenberg was content to wait.

The most immediate effect of the Parufamet Agreement was the migration of UFA film artists and technicians to Hollywood, where they worked for a variety of studios. This migration drained UFA of talent, although it was random and temporary. Many German technicians, actors, and minor directors settled in Hollywood to pursue modestly successful careers. Karl Freund, for example, not only became one of the most able Hollywood cinematographers of the 1930s, but also directed a handful of superbly atmospheric horror thrillers for Universal and MGM that conferred a substantial legacy of German Expressionism on the Hollywood horror film as a sound-film genre.

G. W. Pabst and "Street" Realism

Another effect of the Dawes plan on the German film industry was less direct than the Parufamet Agreement but more important to the general trend of domestic production. The period after 1924 produced—superficially, at least—a return to social normalcy in Germany. As a consequence, German cinema began to turn away from the morbid and mannered psychological themes of Expressionism and *Kammerspiel* and toward the kind of literal (but still studio-produced) realism exemplified by the "street films" (*Strassenfilme*) of the second half of the decade—G. W. Pabst's *Die freudlose Gasse* (*The Joyless Street*, 1925), Bruno Rahn's *Dirnentragödie* (*Tragedy of the Street*, 1927), Joe May's *Asphalt* (1929), and Piel Jutzi's *Berlin—Alexanderplatz* (1931). Named for their prototype, Karl Grune's *Die Strasse* (*The Street*, 1923), these films all dealt realistically with the plight of ordinary people in the postwar period of inflation and incarnated the spirit of *die neue Sachlichkeit* ("the new objectivity"), which entered German society and art at every level during this time. Cynicism, resignation, disillusionment, and a desire to accept "life as it is" were the major characteristics of *die neue Sachlichkeit*, and these translated into a type of grim social realism in the street films.

The undisputed master of the new realism was the Austrian-born director G. W. (Georg Wilhelm) Pabst (1885–1967). Trained in the theater, Pabst, a latecomer to Weimar cinema, directed his first film, *Der Schatz* (*The Treasure*), rather perfunctorily in 1923. His next film, however, was *Die freudlose Gasse* (*The Joyless Street*, 1925), which achieved world recognition as a masterpiece of cinematic social realism. The film concerns the financial and spiritual ruin of the middle classes through inflation in postwar Vienna, focusing on the lives of several destitute bourgeois families struggling to preserve their dignity and decency in the face of secret starvation. The misery of their existence is contrasted with the extravagant pleasure-seeking of the war profiteers. Daughters of the middle class—the most prominent played by the Scandinavian actresses Asta Nielsen and Greta Garbo (in her German screen debut)—sell themselves into prostitution to save their families, while the wealthy amuse themselves at opulent black-market nightclubs where these girls must eventually come to be "bought."

Yet there is no sentimentality or symbolism in the presentation. Pabst captures "life as it is" with a kind of photographic realism that completely rejects the subjective camera of Murnau and Freund. Like theirs, of course, Pabst's camera does move, but the essential dynamism of his films is generated through cutting and, more specifically, cutting on a character's movement.

Pabst was the first German director to be substantially influenced by Sergei Eisenstein's theory and practice of montage (which is discussed in Chapter 5). In fact, prior to Pabst, German cinema had evolved through its various phases as essentially a cinema of mise-en-scène, rather than of montage, because it had developed in isolation from the innovations of Griffith and his Russian successors. Pabst's own contribution to film technique was the discovery that the perceptual fragmentation created by editing within scenes could be effectively concealed for the purpose of narration by cutting a shot in the middle of a motion that is completed in the next shot. The spectator's eye follows the character's movement and not the film's (not, that is, the cut itself), which

(right) Jaro Furth and Greta Garbo in *Die freudlose Gasse* (*The Joyless Street*; G. W. Pabst, 1925).

renders the whole process of montage more fluid and comprehensible.

Thus, a director who wished to cut smoothly from a full shot of an actor to a medium shot from the waist up might require the actor to begin some incidental movement or gesture in the full shot that could be completed in the medium shot after the cut—for example, lighting a cigarette, answering a phone, or even rising from a chair. This kind of cutting (sometimes called "invisible editing" or **continuity editing**) became fundamental to the classical sound film, where it is often necessary to create visual bridges between shots corresponding to aural bridges on the soundtrack (for instance, a character may move from one shot into several others while speaking continuous dialogue, so that the visual sequence must be made to seem continuous as well). Ironically, by neutralizing the perceptual fragmentation inherent in narrative montage, Pabst actually increased its potential for use in any given sequence, and one hallmark of his later films is the large number of barely perceptible cuts he uses per scene.

Another hallmark is Pabst's increasing use of **motivated point of view** through the **eyeline match** and the **shot-reverse-shot** figure. In an eyeline match, the first shot shows a character looking at something off-screen (i.e., beyond the borders of the frame), while the second shot shows the object of his or her gaze, creating an illusion of spatial contiguity. Shot-reverse-shot is cutting back and forth between eyelines as two characters look off-screen at each other, and it would become the most prevalent continuity figure in classical Hollywood cinema of the 1930s and the 1940s.

Cutting on movement, in combination with motivated point of view in the eyeline match and the shot-reverse-shot figure, enabled Pabst to produce elaborate—but seemingly effortless—continuity structures. In *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney* (*The Love of Jeanne Ney*, 1927), for example, one two-minute narrative sequence contains more than forty fluid cuts, representing—both subjectively and objectively—the perspectives of three separate characters as they move about a room during a heated argument. Pabst increasingly refined these techniques with each successive film, and it seems correct to say that, symbolically at least, he brought to its logical conclusion Edwin S. Porter's discovery that a scene may be broken down into more than one shot and that the shot is the basic signifying unit of the cinema.





Geheimnisse einer Seele (*Secrets of a Soul*; G. W. Pabst, 1926): Freud on film.

Pabst's later films continue his involvement with social realism, although they are sometimes diluted by melodrama and fantasy, the inescapable legacy of Expressionism. *Geheimnisse einer Seele* (*Secrets of a Soul*, 1926), for example, a cinematic case history of an anxiety neurosis, contains some of the most vivid dream sequences ever recorded on film. In *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney*, Pabst returned to the social arena to film the progress of a love affair caught up in the turmoil of the Russian Revolution and its aftermath. Photographed in semi-documentary fashion with natural lighting by Fritz Arno Wagner and Robert Lach, often using real locations, the film portrays postwar European society in the process of rapid disintegration; in it, Pabst carried his sophisticated cutting techniques to new heights.

Pabst's last two silent films, *Die Büchse der Pandora* (*Pandora's Box*, 1929) and *Das Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* (*Diary of a Lost One*, 1929), both concern the lives of prostitutes (played in each case by the striking American actress Louise Brooks [1906–1985]) and the way in which their degraded roles relate to the general decadence of society.

(right) Louise Brooks, an icon of Weimar decadence, in *Die Büchse der Pandora* (*Pandora's Box*; G. W. Pabst, 1929).





Down and Out

The UFA style of architectural composition and pictorial lighting was becoming an end in itself, and the sheer extravagance of its productions had substantially diminished the studio's economic stability. (Murnau's *Faust*, for example, was rumored to have overrun its costs by four times the budgeted amount.) It is significant in this regard that the last two important films of Weimar cinema were "montage documentaries" shot on location in and around Berlin. Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (*Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*, 1927), based on an idea by Carl Mayer, employed the candid camera and rhythmic montage techniques of Dziga Vertov's "kino-eye" group (see Chapter 5) to create an abstract portrait of the city and its teeming life from dawn to midnight on a late spring day.

Menschen am Sonntag (*People on Sunday*, 1929), a semi-documentary account of two young couples on holiday at a lake outside Berlin, was the collaborative effort of several young men who would later become notable directors of the sound era in America—Robert Siodmak, Fred Zinnemann, Edgar G. Ulmer, and Billy Wilder (Eugen Schüfftan, who would also emigrate to Hollywood, was the cinematographer). Like its wholly documentary predecessor, *Menschen am Sonntag* showed the marked influence of Vertov and Soviet montage.

It was the American influence, however, that proved most powerful, and many film historians have blamed the decline of Weimar cinema on the intrusion of Hollywood money and manners into Germany after the Parufamet Agreement was signed. It is well known, for example, that Pabst was ordered by UFA executives to direct *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney* in the "American style" and that the film barely survived the attempt. Indeed, the American style in Neubabelsberg proved even less successful than the UFA style in Hollywood. Other film scholars have argued that German cinema was artistically impoverished by the talent raids that Hollywood made on UFA in 1926; certainly, the loss of Murnau and so many of his associates was significantly detrimental to the studio.

Finally, UFA was so literally impoverished by American competition, both international and domestic, in the wake of the Dawes plan, that it had to be bailed out by the political Right. It seems clear, however, that the thematic legacy of Expressionism was tragedy and despair. Indeed, as Siegfried Kracauer shows time and time again in his book *From Caligari to Hitler*, the struggle for control of the self, which provided the great theme of Weimar cinema, was always *lost* on the screen, and this had the effect of increasing the insecurity and thus the authoritarian tendencies of the masses, which in the postwar era included large segments of the middle class brought low by inflation. Because the German form of government was republican and Germany was a conquered nation, however, this authoritarian impulse had no means of expression, and the collective mind of society was paralyzed by its inability to articulate itself.

It was not the Nazis who destroyed German cinema, then, but the cultural preconditions that permitted their rise to power, and even though UFA managed to produce a handful of truly distinguished films between 1929 and 1933, the vital spark of the German screen had been extinguished.

(left) *Berlin: die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (*Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*; Walter Ruttman, 1927).



Earth (*Zemlia*; Alexander Dovzhenko, 1930).



05

Soviet Silent Cinema and the Theory of Montage, 1917–1931

Prerevolutionary Cinema

Before the Bolshevik (Communist) Revolution of October 1917, the film industry in Russia was mainly European. Agents of Lumière Frères, Pathé, Gaumont, and Danish Nordisk had established large distribution branches in several cities at the turn of the century, and the first native Russian studio (Drankov) was not founded until 1908. About 90 percent of all films shown in Russia between 1898 and the outbreak of World War I were imported. Between 1914 and 1916, this figure declined to 20 percent, as the number of domestic film-producing firms more than doubled, from eighteen to forty-seven, in the absence of foreign competition. Yet most of these operations were thinly capitalized, and by mid-1917, there were only three major production companies in the entire country (Khanzhonkov, Ermoliev, and Thiemann & Reinhardt). Ninety percent of all filmmaking activity was concentrated in the major cities of Moscow and Petrograd. All technical equipment and film stock were imported from Germany or France.

The film industry in Russia was small because the cinema had not yet become a

popular art form, as it had in the West. Unlike their German counterparts, the Russian working classes were too impoverished to attend the movies, and the ultraconservative ruling classes simply didn't care to.

With few exceptions, prerevolutionary cinema had been thought to be generally mediocre until Soviet archives were opened to the West in the late 1980s. It was discovered then that 286 of the 1,716 Russian films made from 1907 to 1917 had survived, revealing an unsuspected richness of subject matter and mise-en-scène, influenced—initially, at least—by the French *film d'art* style. Many of them adapt classic works of nineteenth-century Russian literature (notably, Tolstoi, Turgenev, and Pushkin) and adhere to an aesthetic of immobility called the "Russian style," which combined the psychological pauses of the Moscow Art Theater with the poetic acting styles of early Danish and Italian cinema.

The two main directors of the period were Iakov Protazanov (1881–1945) and Evgeni Bauer (1865–1917). Working primarily for the Ermoliev company, Protazanov made seventy-three films in every genre before the Revolution, only seven of which survive. These include four starring Ivan Mozhukhin (1890–1939), famous for his expressive acting style, and later, as the subject of the editing experiment that demonstrated the "Kuleshov effect." After the Revolution, Protozanov went briefly into exile in Paris and Berlin, but he returned in 1924 to make *Aelita*, the first Soviet science-fiction film, for the new Mezhrabpom-Russ studio in Moscow, where he continued to direct well into the sound era.

Bauer began working in the prerevolutionary cinema as a set designer and then directed eighty-two films between 1913 and 1917, most of which he also produced, scripted, and photographed. Of the twenty-six that survive, the earliest show the marked influence of Danish films (widely distributed in prerevolutionary Russia, as in prewar Germany), in terms of their lighting and framing. Bauer's most remarkable films tend to focus on the dramatic extremes of human emotion and contain bold scenic and lighting design, as well as deep-space tracking shots, which Bauer himself conceived and executed. Bauer made all of his films for Khanzhonkov & Company Ltd., in which he became a principal shareholder shortly before he died of pneumonia, contracted while shooting on location in the Crimea. Another prominent Khanzhonkov filmmaker was pioneer puppet animator Władysław Starewicz (1882–1965), who did remarkable experimental work for the Khanzhonkov studio, combining live action with animation through multiple exposure and montage, as well as directing about fifty features, before emigrating to Paris in 1919.

When Russia entered the war in 1914, foreign films could no longer be imported, and the tsarist government attempted to stimulate domestic production, especially of documentary and educational films, by creating a Military Film Section within the Skobelev Committee (an organization named for its chairman, which had originally been founded to assist veterans of the Russo-Japanese War) and giving it exclusive rights to film at the battlefront. The commercial film industry continued to make escapist entertainment, but the committee specifically encouraged the production of propaganda documentaries and features to stem growing discontent with the tsarist regime. This effort was not and could not have been successful because social conditions in Russia had become so bad by the second year of the war that a revolution was imminent. The armed forces, underfed and under-equipped, had suffered heavy losses. There were shortages of food and fuel everywhere, and the civilian population was completely demoralized.

The Origins of Soviet Cinema

In February 1917, the tsarist regime was replaced by a provisional parliamentary government under Alexander Kerenski (1881–1970), who unwisely attempted to continue Russia's involvement in the war. Kerenski's government immediately abolished film censorship and reorganized the Skobelev Committee to produce anti-tsarist propaganda. Yet only two films (*Nicholas II* [*Tsar Nikolai II*] and *The Past Will Not Die* [*Proshloie ne umryot*]) were made under this new dispensation, because the provisional government was overthrown by the Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Il'ich Lenin (1870–1924), in the October Revolution of 1917. There followed the establishment of the Soviet government at Petrograd; a bitter three-year civil war between the Red (pro-Communist) and the White (anti-Communist) factions of the Russian army; an invasion by France, Britain, the United States, Japan, and other World War I allies; a crippling foreign trade embargo; and finally, economic collapse and famine.

In the midst of this chaos, the Bolshevik leaders looked to film as a means of reunifying their shattered nation. As a party of 200,000 that had assumed the leadership of 160 million people, most of them illiterate, scattered across the single largest contiguous land



Vladimir Il'ich Lenin and his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya (c. 1920).

mass in the world and speaking more than one hundred separate languages, the Bolsheviks' most immediate task was one of communication and consolidation, and they saw film as the perfect medium for this endeavor. Film, after all, speaks only one language—one that doesn't require literacy to comprehend—and, through mass distribution, can communicate the same ideas to millions of people at once. As Lenin himself declared of the situation, "The cinema is for us the most important of the arts."

Unfortunately, most producers and technicians of the prerevolutionary commercial cinema were capitalists openly hostile to the Bolshevik government (and vice versa). They emigrated to Europe, taking their equipment and film stock with them and, in the process, often wrecking the studios they left behind. No new equipment or film stock (i.e., celluloid) could be imported into Russia because of the foreign blockade, and massive power shortages severely restricted the use of what few resources remained. Nevertheless, in the face of these obstacles, the Soviet government scrapped the Skobelev Committee and set up a special subsection on cinema (ultimately, the Cinema Committee) within the New People's Commissariat of Education (Narodnyi kommissariat prosveshcheniia, abbreviated Narkompros), whose head was the playwright and literary critic Anatoli Lunacharski (1875–1933).

In August 1919, the Soviet film industry was nationalized and placed under Narkompros. Headed by Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya (1869–1939), the Cinema Committee founded a film school in Moscow to train actors and technicians for the cinema (another was established briefly at Petrograd): the VGIK (Vsesoyuznyi gosudarstveni institut kinematografii—All-Union State Institute of Cinematography). This school was the first of its kind in the world, and it remained among the most widely imitated and respected until the Soviet Union's demise in late 1991. Its initial purpose was to train people in the production of *agitki*—newsreels edited for the purpose of agitation and propaganda, or "agitprop."

Starting in 1918, these *agitki* toured Russia on specially equipped agit-trains and agit-steamers designed to export the Revolution from the urban centers to the

provinces—an immense undertaking in a country containing one-sixth of the world's land mass and one-twelfth of its population. Indeed, because of the severe shortage of film stock and the chaotic conditions of the new Soviet state, almost all films made during the years of the civil war (1918–1920) were newsreels of this sort. Thus, at its birth, the Soviet cinema was a cinema of propaganda in documentary form. And its first major artist was, appropriately, the first great practitioner and theorist of the documentary form, Dziga Vertov.

Dziga Vertov and the Kino-Eye

Dziga Vertov (b. Denis Kaufman, 1896–1954) was born in Białystok, Poland, then part of the Russian Empire. In 1918, he became an **editor** of newsreels for the Cinema Committee. Cameramen traveling about the country to record the progress of the Red Army in the civil war and the activities of the new government would send their footage back to Moscow, where it was edited into newsreels by Vertov and others. At first, Vertov was content to assemble the footage in a purely functional manner, but he gradually began to experiment with more expressive kinds of editing. By 1921, Vertov had made three feature-length compilation documentaries from his weekly newsreel footage: *Anniversary of the Revolution* (*Godovshchina revoliutsii*, 1919—the first Soviet feature film), *The Battle at Tsaritsyn* (*Srazheniie v Tsaritsyne*, 1920), and a thirteen-part *History of the Civil War* (*Istoriya grazhdanskoi voiny*, 1921). In all of them, he experimented with subliminal cuts of one to two frames each, color tinting by hand, expressive titles, and the dramatic reconstruction of documentary events.

The period immediately following the Revolution was one of extraordinary creative fervor in the arts. Because Vertov's early films were strongly pro-Soviet and he was one of few pro-Soviets making films, his experiments were actively encouraged by the Cinema Committee, and he began to gather about him a small band of committed young documentarists who came to call themselves the *Kinoki* (from *kino-oki*, "cinema-eyes" [plural]). This group published a series of radical manifestos in the early 1920s denouncing conventional narrative cinema as "impotent" and demanding that it be replaced by a new cinema based on the "organization of camera-recorded documentary material" (Vertov). The key terms here are "camera-recorded" and "organization," for Vertov and his colleagues believed both in the absolute ability of the cinema apparatus to reproduce reality as it actually appears *and* in the necessity of editing to arrange this reality into an expressive and persuasive whole. This doctrine, called by Vertov ***kino-glaz*** ("cinema-eye" [singular]), contributed significantly to the montage aesthetics that, as we shall see, came to dominate the Soviet silent cinema after 1924. Yet it also produced a number of stunning documentary achievements in its own right.

In 1922, Lenin ordered a fixed ratio (dubbed the "Leninist film proportion") to be established between Soviet information and entertainment films. The exact ratio was unspecified and in fact was never officially acknowledged, but Vertov militantly insisted that it should be four to one. Shortly thereafter, he launched a new series of consciously crafted newsreel-documentaries, collectively titled *Kino-pravda* ("film-truth"), which were specifically designed to test his theories. The twenty-three *Kino-pravda* films Vertov made between 1922 and 1925 employed a wide variety of experimental techniques, but none as startling as his first



A poster by Alexander Rodchenko for *Kino-glaz* (*The Movie-Eye*; Dziga Vertov, 1924).



The Man with a Movie Camera (*Chelovek s kinoapparatom*; Dziga Vertov, 1929).

independently shot nonarchival feature, *Kino-glaz* (*The Movie-Eye*, or *Cinema-Eye*, 1924), which used trick photography, animation, **microphotography**, multiple exposure, and "candid camera" techniques to create what one critic has called "an epic vision of actuality." Between 1925 and 1929, Vertov made three similar features, but his most exhaustive essay in the "kino-eye" technique was his major work, *The Man with a Movie Camera* (*Chelovek s kinoapparatom*, 1929).

This film utilizes every resource of editing and camera manipulation known to silent cinema to create a portrait of "life caught unawares" on a typical day in Moscow from dawn to dusk. Yet *The Man with a Movie Camera* is less about Moscow than about cinema itself, for it constantly seeks to reveal the process of its own making. The film contains recurrent images of the cameraman, Vertov's brother, Boris Kaufman, shooting it; Vertov's wife, Elizaveta Svilova, editing it; and people in a theater watching it. Point of view is manipulated to such an extent that it breaks down, and the camera's power to transform reality is flaunted in a continuous burst of cinematic pyrotechnics that include variable camera speeds, dissolves, split-screen effects, the use of prismatic lenses, multiple superimposition, animation, microphotography, and elaborately structured montage.

In *The Man with a Movie Camera*, Vertov had progressed from documentarist to ciné-poet, creating a kind of metacinema, or self-reflexive cinema, that prefigures the work of the French New Wave. Unlike most other serious filmmakers of his day, Vertov welcomed the coming of sound, seeing it as a means of augmenting the "cinema-eye" with the "radio-ear," and he continued to make films through the 1940s, including the experimental *Enthusiasm: Symphony of the Don Basin* (*Entuziazm: Simfoniia Donbassa*, 1931) and *Three Songs of Lenin* (*Tri pesni o Leninye*, 1934).

Although his international influence during the 1930s on both the avant-garde and the conventional documentary was strong, by the late 1920s Vertov's



Three Songs of Lenin (*Tri pesni o Leninye*; Dziga Vertov, 1934).

switch from short films (which, packaged with commercial entertainment features, were seen by huge audiences in the USSR) to documentary features (which were attended by almost no one) earned him the reputation of a sponsored filmmaker who could not cover his costs and was spending too much of the government's money. In the 1930s, Vertov fell into disfavor with Stalin and was accused of **"formalist"** error—the sometimes deadly sin of exalting the aesthetic form of a work above its ideological content. In the 1960s and the 1970s, however, Vertov came to be regarded as a prophet of ***cinéma vérité*** (a term derived by translating *kino-pravda* into French) and the father of the new nonfiction film. More important, it is clear today that Vertov was a co-founder of the Soviet silent cinema, which gives him a major role in one of the greatest movements in the history of film.

Lev Kuleshov and the Kuleshov Workshop

The other recognized co-founder was Lev Kuleshov (1899–1970), one of the few prerevolutionary filmmakers to remain in Russia after 1917. Kuleshov began his career as a set designer at the Khanzhonkov studios for the director Evgeni Bauer (1865–1917) in 1916, at the age of seventeen, and actually completed Bauer's last feature, *For Luck* (*Za schast'en*, 1917), when the director was fatally injured while filming on location. During the civil war, he became a cameraman for the agit-trains and was active in establishing the VGIK in 1919. Like Vertov, Kuleshov was interested in the theory as well as the practice of cinema; he had

published his first articles on the subject in the trade journal *Vestnik kinematografii* (*Cinema Herald*) in 1917. Nevertheless, Kuleshov's superiors at the film school lacked confidence in the zealous twenty-year-old's ability to work within an orthodox curriculum, and they permitted him to conduct his own study group outside the formal structure of the institute. This "Kuleshov Workshop" drew the most radical and innovative young students at the film school, Sergei Eisenstein and V. I. Pudovkin among them, and concerned itself mainly with experiments in editing.

Because of the severe shortage of raw film stock and equipment that afflicted the Soviet Union in the immediate postrevolutionary period, the workshop's initial experiments involved the production of "films without celluloid." Kuleshov and his students would write scenarios, direct and act them out as if before cameras, and then—on paper—assemble the various "shots" into completed "films." Soon, however, Kuleshov had another subject and model for experimentation in the most sophisticatedly constructed film made to date—D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916).

Intolerance had been brought into Russia for commercial distribution in the year of its release, but exhibitors had rejected it as incomprehensible. The film was shelved until after the Revolution, when the Bolshevik government arranged premieres in Petrograd (November 1918) and Moscow (May 1919) in recognition of its powerful "agitational" qualities. Lenin, impressed with what he took to be the proletarian sympathies of the modern story, apparently ordered that it be shown throughout the Soviet Union—where, according to Iris Barry, it ran continuously for almost ten years. All available film stock was gathered up to be used in duplicating prints. In any case, as the late Jay Leyda pointed out in his book *Kino*, a monumental history of the Russian and Soviet film, *Intolerance* went on to become the Soviet film industry's first great popular, political, and aesthetic success. To quote Leyda: "We know for certain of the popular success of *Intolerance*, and we know as certainly of the tremendous aesthetic and technical impetus given to *all* young Soviet film-makers by this and subsequently shown Griffith films. No Soviet film of importance made within the following ten years was to be completely outside *Intolerance*'s sphere of influence."

That influence was imbibed, elaborated, and disseminated largely through the Kuleshov Workshop, where prints of *Intolerance* (and, after the lifting of the blockade in 1920, *The Birth of a Nation*) were screened continuously until, according to legend, they fell apart. Kuleshov and his students spent months studying the precise manner in which Griffith had built up his complicated multiple narrative out of thousands of separate shots, until they had mastered the principle themselves. Then, they reassembled his sequences in hundreds of different combinations to test the ways in which an arrangement of shots produces meaning. As raw film stock began to dribble back into the Soviet Union between 1922 and 1923, as a result of a Soviet-German trade agreement and the success of Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP), Kuleshov struck out on his own and carried the analysis of film structure far beyond anything that had gone before.

Though the form of Kuleshov's initial experiments was dictated by the relative scarcity of raw stock, his ultimate goal was to discover the general laws by which film communicates meaning to an audience—to discover, that is, the way in which film *signifies*. In his most famous experiment, as recounted by V. I. Pudovkin in *Film Technique and Film Acting*, Kuleshov took unedited footage of a completely expressionless face (that of the prerevolutionary matinee idol Ivan Mozhukhin, who had emigrated to Paris after the Revolution) and intercut it with shots of three highly motivated objects: a bowl of hot soup, a dead woman lying in a coffin, and a little girl playing with a teddy bear. When the film strips were shown to randomly selected audiences, they invariably responded as though the actor's face had accurately portrayed the emotion appropriate to the intercut object.

As Pudovkin recalled, "The public raved about the acting of the artist. They pointed out the heavy pensiveness of his mood over the forgotten soup, were touched and moved by the deep sorrow with which he looked on the dead woman, and admired the light, happy smile with which he surveyed the girl at play. But we knew that in all three cases the face was exactly the same." Kuleshov concluded from these results, known today as the "Kuleshov effect," that the shot, or cinematic sign, has two distinct values: (1) that which it possesses in itself as a photographic image of reality and (2) that which it acquires when placed in relationship to other shots.

In another experiment, Kuleshov cut together a shot of a smiling actor with a close-up of a revolver and a second shot of the same actor looking frightened. Audiences naturally interpreted the sequence as portraying cowardice, but when Kuleshov reversed the position of the two shots of the actor within the sequence, the opposite interpretation was made. He reasoned



Illustration of the Kuleshov experiment, predicating the "Kuleshov effect."

from this that the second value of the shot implicit in the Kuleshov effect, that which it acquires when juxtaposed with other shots, was infinitely more important in the generation of cinematic meaning than was the first.

A further experiment involved the creation of "artificial landscapes" through "creative geography"—the juxtaposition of separate shots taken at separate places and times. In one of these, a shot of a man moving from right to left across the frame in one part of Moscow is cut together with a shot of a woman moving from left to right across the frame in another section of the city, while a third shot shows them suddenly meeting in yet another part of Moscow to shake hands. At the conclusion of this shot, the man points

offscreen, and a fourth shot reveals the object of his attention to be the White House in Washington, D.C. The fifth and final shot of the sequence shows the two ascending the steps not of the White House, but of a well-known Moscow church. Kuleshov had thus created the cinematic illusion of spatial and temporal unity by cutting together five separate shots taken at five separate places and times. In yet another experiment, he synthesized the body of a woman out of shots of the faces, the torsos, the hands, and the legs of several separate women.

What Kuleshov demonstrated in these and similar experiments was that in cinema, "real" time and space are absolutely subordinate to the process of editing, or *montage*, as the Soviets came to call it, after the French verb *monter*, "to assemble." Furthermore, as Ron Levaco points out, Kuleshov had shown that the associational power of montage was not inherent in the edited film strip itself, but was the result of the viewer's *perception* of the edited film strip, which makes the montage process an act of consciousness for filmmaker and audience alike. Griffith, of course, had been the first to discover the profound psychological impact that editing could have on an audience, and Soviet filmmakers had distilled many of their theoretical insights from his practice.

Yet Kuleshov's theory of montage went beyond Griffith's editing in a manner described later by his former pupil Sergei Eisenstein: "Griffith's . . . close-ups create atmosphere, outline traits of character, alternate in dialogues of leading characters, and close-ups of the chaser and the chased speed up the tempo of the chase. But Griffith at all times remains on a level of representation and objectivity and nowhere does he try through the juxtaposition of shots to shape import and image." In other words, for Griffith, editing was primarily a narrative and representational mode. It generally served to advance a plot or tell a tale, and the "metaphorical" style of *Intolerance* was largely an aberration. As a result of their experiments, however—and, paradoxically, of their countless screenings of *Intolerance*—Kuleshov and his pupils conceived of montage as an expressive or symbolic process whereby logically or empirically dissimilar images could be linked together synthetically to produce metaphors (to produce, that is, nonliteral meaning). Building on this fundamental notion, Eisenstein and Pudovkin, Kuleshov's two most brilliant students, went on to elaborate distinctly individual theories of montage in their own theoretical writings and films. Yet before this occurred, the Kuleshov Workshop had an opportunity to put its theories into practice.

By 1923, the workshop had secured enough equipment and film stock to begin work on its first feature film—a parody of American detective thrillers titled *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (*Neobychainye prikliucheniia Mistera Vesta v strane bolshevikov*, 1924), directed by Kuleshov. *Mr. West* was, first and foremost, a showcase for the workshop's newly acquired cinematic sophistication, but it was also a very intelligent and amusing satire on popular American misconceptions about the effects of the Bolshevik Revolution. The film was an enormous success with Russian audiences, and it remains today a minor classic of silent comedy. The original Kuleshov group made one final feature together, a science-fiction mystery thriller called *The Death Ray (Luch smerti*, 1925), directed by Kuleshov and written by Pudovkin. *The Death Ray* was a technically dazzling attempt to synthesize material from several popular serials that came under attack from the Communist Party leadership for not being sufficiently ideological.

The workshop broke up in 1925, apparently as a result of these attacks and because Kuleshov's leading actor-assistants got promoted to making their own films, but the following year Kuleshov went on to direct his most widely known film in the West. The feature, *By the Law* (*Dura lex/Po zakonu*, 1926), was sponsored by the newly centralized state cinema trust, Sovkino, which had been established in 1924 to control the film affairs of the entire Soviet Union through government financing. Adapted from Jack London's short story "The Unexpected," with the collaboration of the formalist critic Viktor Shklovsky (1893–1984), *By the Law* achieved an extraordinary blend of emotional intensity and visual stylization on the smallest budget ever allocated for a Soviet feature film. Set almost entirely in a one-room cabin in a desolate region of the Yukon during the winter, it tells the story of two people who are compelled by social conditioning to try, condemn, and execute a third person for the murder of two friends. There are no parallel lines of action and few changes of locale, but Kuleshov achieves an expansion of dramatic space through montage that is remarkable in a film of such narrowly defined scope. The film probably influenced the style of Carl Theodor Dreyer's *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928) two years later. Indeed, the precision and economy of the film are such that one Soviet critic could write on its release, "*By the Law* was worked out in the spirit of an algebraic formula, seeking to obtain the maximum of effect with the minimum of effort."

Unfortunately, the film was poorly received by most of the official critics, and Kuleshov's three subsequent



(left) *By the Law* (*Dura lex/Po zakonu*; Lev Kuleshov, 1926).

silent features were unsuccessful. He made only one sound film of note, *The Great Consoler (Velikii uteshitel*, 1933), loosely based on some O. Henry short stories, which he may in fact have intended as an allegory of the plight of Soviet artists under Stalin. Like Vertov, Kuleshov was denounced for "formalist" error at the 1935 Congress of Film Workers and forced to recant much of his earlier work. He continued to make films until 1944, when he was rewarded for his party loyalty by appointment as head of the VGIK, where he taught and lectured until his death in 1970.

Though Kuleshov contributed a number of important films to his country's repertoire of great cinema, it is as a theorist rather than a practitioner of cinema that he will be most prominently remembered. He was in fact the first practical theorist of the cinema, as Pudovkin recognized when he wrote, in an introduction to Kuleshov's theoretical study *Art of Cinema* in 1929, "We make films—Kuleshov made cinematography." Ron Levaco estimates that more than half of the major Soviet directors since 1920—including Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Boris Barnet, Mikhail Kalatozov, and Sergei Parajanov—had been his students at the Film School at one time or another. His legacy to them and to us is again best articulated by Pudovkin:

> All he said was this: "In every art there must be first a material, and secondly, a method of composing this material specifically adapted to this art. . . ." Kuleshov maintained that the material in filmwork consists of pieces of film, and that the method of composing is their joining together in a particular creatively conceived order. He maintained that film-art does not begin when the artists act and the various scenes are shot—this is only the preparation of the material. Film-art begins from the moment when the director begins to combine and join together the various pieces of film. By joining them in various combinations, in different orders, he obtains differing results.

The discovery and articulation of this notion was the enabling act of Soviet silent cinema and the montage aesthetics on which it was founded. Yet it would be wrong to assume, as so many past accounts have done, that the montage idea came solely from the Kuleshov Workshop, or the influence of *Intolerance,* or the economies imposed on Soviet filmmakers by the scarcity of celluloid. The idea had in fact been very much alive in avant-garde art between 1910 and 1918. As film scholar David Bordwell has pointed out, this was the great period of Futurist and Formalist experimentation, and the notion of fragmentation and reassembly as a means of artistic construction was distinctly in the air. Furthermore, the analogies between montage structure and the Marxist historical dialectic are impressive, as we shall see in the works of Sergei Eisenstein.

Sergei Eisenstein

Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein (1898–1948) was, with D. W. Griffith, one of the two pioneering geniuses of the modern cinema. Yet although their syntactical methods were similar and both worked on an epic historical scale, as artists the two men could hardly have been less alike. Griffith was a sentimentalist whose values were typically those of the Victorian middle class. His films were modernist in form, reactionary in feeling; they were seen by millions, and he made too many of them. Eisenstein, by contrast, was a contemporary Marxist intellectual whose vibrantly revolutionary films, while few in number and seen mainly by other intellectuals, left an indelible mark on history and cinema alike. Where Griffith was unschooled and instinctive, Eisenstein was a modern Renaissance man whose exaggerated intellectualism and omnivorous knowledge astonished all who knew him. Though he completed only seven films in his twenty-three-year career, the impact of these films and of his theoretical writings on the film form itself has been greater than that of any other body of work in the history of the medium, save Griffith's.

Griffith had discovered, in editing, the fundamental narrative structure of the cinema, but he and his followers had used it conservatively to tell nineteenth-century tales. Eisenstein formulated a self-consciously modernist theory of editing, allegedly based on the psychology of perception and the Marxist historical dialectic, which made it possible for the cinema to communicate on its own terms for the first time, without borrowing either matter or form from other media. And, like Griffith, Eisenstein gave the world a handful of films that will always rank among the highest aesthetic achievements of the cinema.

The Formative Years

Eisenstein was born in Riga, Latvia, in 1898; his father was a well-to-do architect and city engineer. Despite early interests in art and the circus, Eisenstein was



sent to the Institute of Civil Engineering in Petrograd, where he was a nineteen-year-old student when the tsarist regime began to crumble in February 1917. The institute immediately disbanded, Eisenstein's parents departed for Western Europe, and Eisenstein joined the Red Army as an engineer.

After a year of building bridges and fortifications during the civil war, he drifted back toward his natural impulses, working in 1919 as a poster artist on an agit-train and helping to stage amateur theatricals for army troops. Then, through a chance meeting with an old friend, he became first a set designer and then a director for the Moscow Proletkult Theater. The Proletkult concept, with more than two hundred local branches, had been established during the Revolution for the purpose of "replacing the bourgeois culture of tsarist times with a purely proletarian one."

When Eisenstein joined Moscow's Proletkult Theater in 1920, it was a virtual clearinghouse for avant-garde experiment and modernist ideas. The world-famous stage director Konstantin Stanislavski (1863–1938) lectured daily on "method" acting here, while the equally prominent director Vsevolod Meyerhold railed against Stanislavski's technique of realistic interpretation and called for an anti-traditional theater—a stylized, nonverbal, and popular theater that would use pantomime, acrobatics, Meyerhold's own system of "bio-mechanics," and all the resources of circus spectacle and commedia dell'arte to create "a machine for acting." Here, too, the futurist poet and playwright Vladimir Maiakovski expounded his radical aesthetic doctrines, the actor-director Mikhail Chekhov lectured on Hindu philosophy and yoga, and weekly seminars were held on Marxism, Freudian psychology, and Pavlovian reflexology.

Eisenstein fell first under the influence of Meyerhold, who had not worked in the cinema again after his two prerevolutionary films. Yet Eisenstein spoke of him as his "artistic father" much later, after Meyerhold had been discredited and denounced during the Stalin-era purge trials. Meyerhold, for his part, claimed that "all Eisenstein's work had its origins in the laboratory where we once worked together as teacher and pupil."

What Eisenstein learned from Meyerhold was, essentially, the possibility of mixing two ostensibly contradictory artistic approaches—that of rigorous systematization and spontaneous improvisation. Under Meyerhold's method for acting, which he called bio-mechanics, spontaneity was systematically conditioned. According to film scholar Peter Wollen, the notion drew on such varied sources as Pavlovian reflexology, Taylorism (the study of workers' physical movements, invented in America to increase production), the Italian commedia dell'arte, the philosophy of pragmatism articulated by William James, acrobatic Douglas Fairbanks films, the German Romantic puppet theater, and highly stylized Asian theater. Eisenstein's encounter with bio-mechanics marked the beginning of his lifelong theoretical concern with the psychological effects of the aesthetic experience: specifically, the question of which combination of aesthetic stimuli will produce which responses in the perceiver under which conditions.

Eisenstein's preoccupation with this phenomenon was encouraged by his friend and colleague at the Proletkult Theater, Sergei Yutkevich (1904–1985), who would become a prominent Soviet director during the sound era. It was Yutkevich who involved Eisenstein in designing sets for the futurist Workshop Theater, run by an expatriate German baron named Foregger, where the use of parodic masks introduced him to the notion of **typage** (essentially, creating public stereotypes) so important to his early films, and it was he who later introduced Eisenstein to the Factory of the Eccentric Actor (FEX) group in Petrograd. The FEX was a futurist theatrical movement run by Grigori Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg (later to collaborate as director and scenarist on many important Soviet films of the 1920s and the 1930s) that combined elements of the circus, the cabaret, and the music hall, as well as of American adventure and slapstick comedy films.

Eisenstein's contact with the FEX group clearly influenced the form of his first stage production for the Proletkult in 1923, an adaptation of a work by the nineteenth-century dramatist Alexander Ostrovski (1823–1886) titled *Enough Simplicity in Every Wise Man*, or simply *The Wise Man* (*Mudrets*). Eisenstein took the bare bones of the plot and organized them not into acts or scenes, but into a series of "attractions," as in a circus or a cabaret. The stage, in fact, was laid out like a circus arena—with trapezes, tightropes, and parallel bars—and the audience was treated to a long procession of acrobatic acts, satirical sketches, "noise bands" reproducing the sounds of the "new industrial age," and finally, firecrackers exploding beneath every seat in the house. At one point in the performance, Eisenstein even projected a short film (his first) parodying Dziga Vertov's *Kino-pravda* newsreel.

Eisenstein called this assault on the audience's sensibility the "montage of attractions," and to

(left) Sergei Eisenstein.

elaborate on the concept, he published his first theoretical manifesto in Maiakovski's radical literary journal *Lef* in 1923. Eisenstein wrote that he had long sought a scientific "unit of measurement" for gauging the emotional effects of art and had found it at last in the "attraction." He further said that the montage of attractions ("units of impression combined into one whole") could be used to introduce "a new level of tension" into the aesthetic experience that would produce a theater "of such emotional saturation that the wrath of a man would be expressed by a backward somersault from a trapeze." Thus, before he ever attempted to make a serious film, Eisenstein had articulated a rudimentary theory of montage as a process whereby independent and arbitrary units of "attraction" or "impression" were assembled to produce a total emotional effect different from the sum of its parts.

From Theater to Film

Eisenstein's directorial debut, *Strike* (1925), a film that depicts a workers' strike in a prerevolutionary-era Russian factory, was conceived as a revolutionary assault on the "bourgeois cinema"—that is, the narrative cinema as practiced in the West thus far. To this end, though all sequences were shot against natural backgrounds, the strike of the title was not a particular historical event but was instead portrayed as a representative example. Furthermore, Eisenstein abandoned the traditional individual hero for a collective one—his film's aggregate protagonist consisted of the striking workers in their struggle against the brutal and oppressive factory system, and no single one of them was shown to be more socially valuable or thematically significant than another. Finally, in an effort to forge an "unbreakable link" between the Marxist



Armed invasion of the workers' tenement in *Strike* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925).

dialectic and cinematic form, Eisenstein planned the entire film as an extended montage of "attractions" or "shock stimuli" that would agitate the audience into identifying with the striking workers.

Strike evolves in a nonnarrative chronicle form that was clearly influenced by Vertov's doctrine of the "kino-eye" (though, to underscore the agitational aspect of his work, Eisenstein would later say, "I don't believe in the [kino-]eye; I believe in the [kino-] fist") and the editing experiments of Kuleshov. *Strike* was the first revolutionary mass film of the new Soviet state, and although some critics accused it of formalism, its agitational impact on the few who saw it was great.

More important, however, *Strike* inaugurated the classic period of Soviet silent cinema at a time when the silent cinemas of the West had nearly reached their peak. In the United States, by 1924, D. W. Griffith had already produced his greatest work, and Griffith, Erich von Stroheim, Robert Flaherty, Charlie Chaplin, and Buster Keaton were all at work on major films (*America*, *Greed*, *Moana*, *The Gold Rush*, and *Sherlock Jr.*, respectively). German cinema was passing from Expressionism to the "new realism" with F. W. Murnau's *Der letzte Mann* (1924), and the careers of Murnau, Ernst Lubitsch, and Fritz Lang were flourishing. In France, avant-garde cinema had reached its height with the films of Germaine Dulac, Louis Delluc, Jean Epstein, Marcel L'Herbier, Jacques Feyder, and René Clair (Clair's influential *Entr'acte* and Fernand Léger's famous *Ballet mécanique* both appeared in 1924). Italian silent cinema had peaked with its series of prewar super-spectacles and had declined long before 1924.

Thus, Soviet silent cinema was a latecomer compared to the silent cinemas of the West, in large part because of the socioeconomic chaos created by the 1917 Revolution and the civil war. Yet by 1924, although raw film stock and equipment were still in scant supply, the means of film distribution had once more been stabilized, and all prerevolutionary cinema theaters (some 2,500 of them) had been reopened: the Soviet film industry was at last prepared to embark on a period of creative growth.

The Production of *Battleship Potemkin*

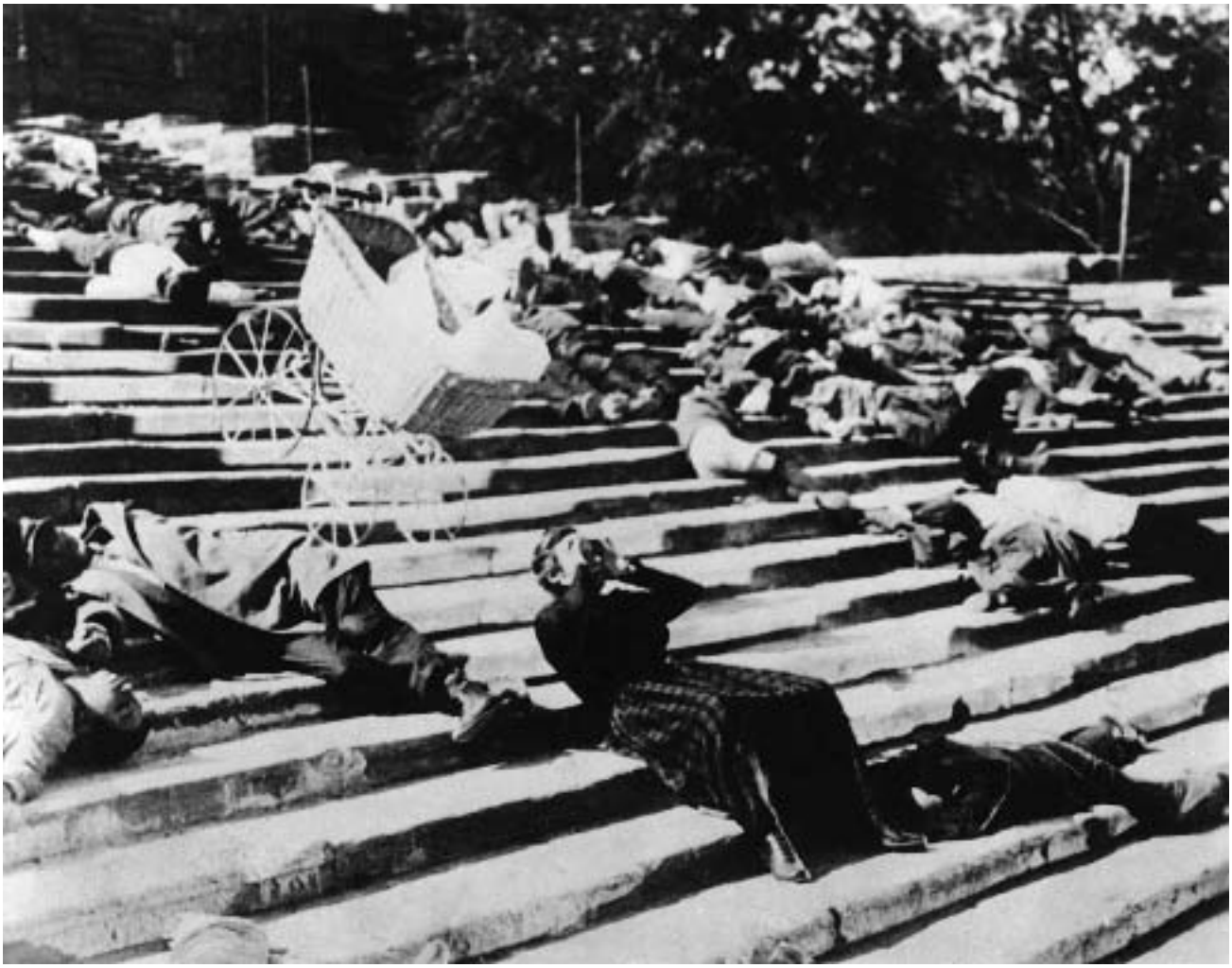
The year 1925 was the twentieth anniversary of the abortive 1905 Revolution against tsarism, and the Jubilee Committee decided to sponsor a series of films to commemorate it. On the basis of *Strike*, Eisenstein was selected to direct the keynote film, *Year 1905* (*1905 God*), which was to provide a historical panorama of the entire uprising from the Russo-Japanese War in January to the crushing of the armed rebellion in Moscow in December.

Battleship Potemkin (*Bronenosets Potyomkin*, 1925), the film that emerged, has been called by many critics the most perfect and concise example of film structure in the history of the cinema. With *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Citizen Kane* (1941), *Potemkin* is widely regarded as one of the most important and influential films ever made. Its montage represents a quantum leap from the relatively simple juxtapositions of *Strike*. Indeed, Eisenstein created a completely new editing technique merely foreshadowed in his first film—one based on psychological stimulation, rather than on narrative logic, which managed to communicate physical and emotional sensation directly to the audience. Furthermore, the film's revolutionary impact inaugurated a whole new school of filmmaking and brought international prestige to the young Soviet cinema at a time when it was sorely needed.

The most important aspect of *Potemkin* is its editing, but it would be wrong to assume that Eisenstein's interest in montage caused him to neglect the pictorial or compositional aspects of his film. In fact, Eisenstein composed every single frame of *Potemkin* with a painter's eye for the distribution of light, mass, and geometric design (the triangle, circle, and diagonal intersection were his basic visual motifs). Nevertheless, the film Eisenstein created from these beautifully composed frames was first and foremost a political film intended to appeal to the broadest possible audience.

The Structure of *Potemkin*

Like *Strike*, *Potemkin* is a drama of mass action with a collective hero, and it was shot entirely with nonactors against naturalistic backgrounds. Of its recognizably documentary surface, Eisenstein would later write, "*Potemkin* looks like a chronicle or newsreel of an event, but it functions as a drama." Indeed, unlike its relatively formless predecessor, *Potemkin* is divided into five movements or acts whose structural symmetry is very nearly perfect. *Potemkin* was given a gala public opening in Moscow on January 18, 1926, but rival filmmakers claimed that it was a glorified documentary, inaccessible to the average audience. Yet when Soviet embassies in Paris and Berlin showed



Baby carriage on the Odessa steps in *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potyomkin*; Sergei Eisenstein, 1925).

the film to left-wing opinion makers at invitational screenings, its word-of-mouth reputation soared. In the spring of 1926, the German Marxist composer Edmund Meisel worked closely with Eisenstein to prepare a stirring revolutionary score for *Potemkin* (a collaboration that Eisenstein later described as his "first work in the sound film") that made the film's agitational appeal very nearly irresistible. *Potemkin* was shown commercially in Germany for several weeks but was officially banned in many other European countries, where it was nevertheless shown underground to small audiences of leftists and intellectuals, and its fame spread rapidly throughout the Western world. The film's triumphs abroad (at its Berlin screening the great stage director Max Reinhardt, whose styles of lighting had so influenced German Expressionism, observed, "After viewing *Potemkin*, I am willing to admit that the stage will have to give way to the cinema") earned Eisenstein the temporary favor of Soviet officials. As Eisenstein later wrote, "I awoke one morning and found myself famous."

Eisenstein's Theory of Dialectical Montage

Part of Eisenstein's growing fame was as a theorist of film, as well as a practitioner. The body of his writings on the medium—later collected into two volumes, *The Film Sense* (1942) and *The Film Form* (1948)—had been steadily accumulating since 1923, and after the resounding international success of *Potemkin*, he began to articulate his most important contribution to film theory: his notion of dialectical montage. To summarize briefly, Eisenstein saw film editing, or

montage, as a process that operated according to the Marxist dialectic. This dialectic is a way of looking at human history and experience as a perpetual conflict in which a force (*thesis*) collides with a counterforce (*antithesis*) to produce from their collision a wholly new phenomenon (*synthesis*) that is not the sum of the two forces but something greater than and different from both of them.

The synthesis emerging from the thesis-antithesis conflict will ultimately become the thesis of a new dialectic, which will in turn generate a new synthesis, and so on until the end of historical time. Eisenstein maintained that in film editing, the shot (or "montage cell") is a thesis that, when placed into juxtaposition with another shot of opposing visual content, its antithesis, produces a synthesis (a synthetic idea or impression) that in turn becomes the thesis of a new dialectic as the montage sequence continues. This visual opposition between shots may be a conflict of linear directions, planes, volumes, lighting, and so on, and need not extend to the dramatic content of the shot. Thus, Eisenstein defined montage as a series of ideas or impressions that arises from "the collision of independent shots," and in a characteristically industrial metaphor he compared its process to "the series of explosions of an internal combustion engine, driving forward its automobile or tractor." Another of Eisenstein's favorite analogies was linguistic: just as the individual words in a sentence depend for their meaning on the words that surround them, so the individual shots in a montage sequence acquire meaning from their interaction with the other shots in the sequence.

The underlying cognitive assumption of this theory is that the viewers of a film perceive the shots in a montage sequence not *sequentially*, or one at a time, but rather *simultaneously*, as if one were continuously superimposed on another. That is, they respond not to an incremental or an additive process in which each shot is modified by the ones that precede it (ABC does not equal A + B + C), but to a *gestalt*—a totality or a whole that is different from and greater than the sum of its parts (ABC = x). This is so because shots A, B, and C can be strictly said to follow one another only on the film strip; when the film strip is projected, however, the viewer's mind puts the shots together in a manner analogous to photographic superimposition. Thus, at the end of the Odessa-steps section of *Potemkin*, when we are shown three consecutive shots of a stone lion—sleeping, awakening, and rising—we see the sequence not as a combination of its parts, but as something quite different: a single unbroken movement with a specifically ideological meaning.



Stone lion rises in fury at the Odessa steps massacre in *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potyomkin*; Sergei Eisenstein, 1925).

Although Griffith's two great epics and Kuleshov's experiments in editing clearly stand behind these notions, Eisenstein developed many of them from his study of the psychology of perception, and to illustrate the process of dialectical montage, he frequently used



Massacre on the Odessa steps in *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potyomkin*; Sergei Eisenstein, 1925).

the example of the Japanese pictograph or ideogram. In Japanese character-writing, completely new concepts are formed by combining the symbols for two separate older ones. Moreover, the new concept is never merely the sum of its parts and is invariably an abstraction that could not be represented graphically on its own terms. For example, the symbol for *dog* plus the symbol for *mouth* create an ideogram meaning not "dog's mouth," as one might expect, but "bark." The combination of two distinct signs for concrete objects produces a single sign for some intangible or abstraction. What Eisenstein was attempting to suggest by examples such as this was the way in which film, whose signs are moving photographic images and therefore *wholly* tangible, can communicate conceptual abstractions on a par with other language forms.

Eisenstein conceived that whole films, as well as autonomous sequences within them, could be constructed according to the dialectic. In other articles, Eisenstein attempted to distinguish five separate types or "methods" of montage, all of which may be used simultaneously within any given sequence: (1) the metric, (2) the rhythmic, (3) the tonal, (4) the overtonal, and (5) the intellectual or ideological.

"Metric montage" is concerned solely with the tempo of the cutting, regardless of the content of the shots. The basis for editing is thus the temporal length or duration of each shot, and these lengths are determined by the imposition of a regular metrical pattern on the cutting rate. His example of accelerating metric montage was the Griffith intercut chase sequence, in which the climax is reached by alternating shots of progressively

shorter duration. (Eisenstein felt that metric montage was both mechanical and primitive, and he identified it with his main Soviet rival, V. I. Pudovkin.)

Eisenstein described "rhythmic montage" as an elaboration of metric montage in which the cutting rate is based on the rhythm of movement *within* the shots, as well as on predetermined metrical demands. This rhythm may be used either to reinforce the metric tempo of the sequence or to counterpoint it. As an example of the latter, Eisenstein cites the Odessa-steps sequence from *Potemkin*, in which the steady rhythm of the soldiers' feet as they descend the stairs within the frame is made to regularly violate the metric tempo of the cutting, creating contrapuntal tension.

"Tonal montage," Eisenstein claimed, represents a stage beyond the rhythmic in which the dominant emotional *tone* of the shots becomes the basis for editing. As an example of tonal montage, Eisenstein cites the fog sequence at the beginning of the third act of *Potemkin*. Here, the basic tonal dominant of the shots is the quality of their light ("haze" and "luminosity"), which all of the other plastic elements of the shots subserve. Tonal montage, then, has to do with neither the cutting rate nor the content of the shots, but rather with their texture. "Overtonal montage" is basically a synthesis of metric, rhythmic, and tonal montage that emerges in projection rather than in the editing process, where only the "undertones" are visible. This is not really a distinct category, but another way of looking at montage based on the totality of stimuli.

"Intellectual or ideological montage" was the type that most fascinated Eisenstein in both his theory and his practice. All of the preceding montage methods are concerned with inducing emotional and/or physiological reactions in the audience through a sophisticated form of behavioristic stimulation. Yet Eisenstein also conceived that montage was capable of expressing abstract ideas by creating *conceptual* relationships among shots of opposing visual content. The intercutting of the massacre of the workers with the slaughter of an ox at the end of *Strike* and the intercutting of the priest tapping his crucifix with the ship's officer tapping his sword in the second act of *Potemkin* are simple manifestations of intellectual montage.

However, the most sophisticated use of this metaphorical technique occurs in Eisenstein's third film, *October* (*Oktiabr*; alternatively titled *Ten Days That Shook the World*, 1928), a magnificent failed attempt to recount the events of the Bolshevik Revolution in terms of pure intellectual cinema. Eisenstein himself cited the "gods" sequence of this film, omitted from most American prints, as a prime example of the







Fog sequence in *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potyomkin*; Sergei Eisenstein, 1925): tonal montage.



Massacre and oxen slaughter montage in *Strike* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925).

method. In it, he offers a montage of various religious icons, beginning with a Baroque statue of Christ and concluding with a hideous primitive idol, to debunk the traditional concept of God. As Eisenstein pointed out later, "These pieces were assembled in accordance with a descending intellectual scale—pulling back the concept of God to its origins, forcing the spectator to perceive this 'progress' intellectually."

A more complex example of intellectual montage in *October* is the famous sequence depicting the rise to power of Alexander Kerenski, head of the coalition or provisional government that preceded the Bolshevik Revolution. Eisenstein presents successive shots of Kerenski solemnly climbing the Baroque marble staircase of the Winter Palace and intercuts them with grandiose titles announcing his ascent through the ranks of the government ("Minister of the Army," "And the Navy," "Generalissimo," "Dictator") and with shots of military flunkies bowing and scraping before him on the landings. At one point, Kerenski passes beneath a statue of Victory that seems about to place a crown of laurels on his head. Then, as he reaches the top of the stairs and stands before the doorway to his office, Eisenstein cuts from his highly polished military boots to his gloved hands, and finally to a mechanical peacock spreading its tail in prideful splendor. The whole sequence is meant to suggest the inflated vanity, monumental pride, and dictatorial ambition of Kerenski and his government.

All of Eisenstein's thinking on montage worked toward the establishment of a uniquely cinematic language based on psychological association and stimulation that had little or nothing to do with narrative logic. Deriving from his lifelong study of the dynamics of aesthetic perception, this language, which Eisenstein chose to call "dialectical montage," operated according to a precise manipulation of audience psychology on both the emotional and the cerebral levels of experience. Later critics, notably followers of the French film theorist André Bazin, have claimed that dialectical montage is too manipulative, even "totalitarian,"

in its selective ordering of the viewer's response. Their objection is largely philosophical, for they believe that the analytical fragmentation of a filmed event through montage, as in the Odessa-steps sequence, destroys "the reality of space" (Bazin) that provides the necessary relationship between the cinematic image and the real world. They believe, in other words, that dialectical montage substitutes artificial and contrived spatial relationships for natural ones.

And yet it is precisely its lack of dependence on "real" or "natural" spatial relationships that renders dialectical montage a symbolic and metaphoric—and therefore *poetic*—language, rather than a narrative one. As Paul Seydor points out in an essay intended to be highly critical of Eisenstein: "Eisenstein's early cinema is quintessentially a cinema of (though not necessarily for) the mind. Space and movement are not literally seen, that is, are not on the screen; they exist only in the viewer's imagination, his eye serving to register the details with which his mind will make the 'proper' points." Whether such a process is ideologically appropriate is a moot point when it works as well aesthetically as it does, say, in *Potemkin*. For Eisenstein and for others, however, it didn't always work, and his third film provides a measure of its limitations.

October (*Ten Days That Shook the World,* 1928): A Laboratory for Intellectual Montage

In the spring of 1927, Eisenstein was commissioned by the Central Committee of the Communist Party and Sovkino to make a film commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Using hundreds of personal memoirs and interviews, newsreel and newspaper accounts, and John Reed's book *Ten Days That Shook the World,* Eisenstein and his coscenarist, Grigori Alexandrov (1903–1984), wrote a detailed shooting script, titled *October*, which initially covered the history of the entire Revolution. Yet as with *Potemkin*, Eisenstein ultimately narrowed his scope to focus on a few representative episodes—the events in Petrograd (now St. Petersburg; at the time of filming, Leningrad) from February to October 1917. Vast resources, including the Soviet army and navy, were placed at Eisenstein's disposal, and life in the city was completely disrupted during the six months of shooting, as mass battles such as the storming and bombardment of the Winter Palace were restaged with casts of tens of thousands. When editing was completed in November 1927, the film ran approximately 13,000 feet, or just under three hours, with a carefully integrated score composed by Edmund Meisel.

During its production, however, Leon Trotski (1879–1940), who as commissar of war had played an enormously important role in the Revolution and the civil war, was expelled from the Politburo (executive committee) of the Communist Party and forced into exile by Iosif Stalin (1879–1953), and Eisenstein was compelled to cut *October* by several thousand feet in order to eliminate all references to the ousted leader. When this truncated version was finally released to the public in March 1928, it was poorly received. Audiences could not understand its abstract intellectual montage, and party critics attacked it bitterly for "formalist excess"—a charge that publicly announced the widening rift between Eisenstein's aesthetics and the new Stalinist establishment.

In *October*, Eisenstein employed intellectual montage on the order of the stone-lion sequence in *Potemkin* to comment on each and every aspect of the Revolution depicted in the narrative portion of the film. Thus, Kerenski is compared to a peacock and his militia to tin soldiers and empty wineglasses through the insertion of shots from outside the dramatic context of the film. Countless other rhetorical devices are used by Eisenstein to maximize the film's ideological effect, from complicated interframe symbolism (as when the history of religion is condensed into a series of shots proceeding from the most "civilized" of icons to the most primitive and barbarous) to simple cinematic trickery (as when a statue of Tsar Alexander III, demolished earlier in the film to represent the success of the Revolution, is magically reassembled through reverse projection to represent the monarchists' vain hopes of returning to power).

In a much-discussed sequence, Eisenstein uses the agonizingly slow raising of a drawbridge to suggest that the city of Petrograd has been split asunder by the Revolution. From one side of the rising bridge dangles a live horse still harnessed to a cart, from the other the flaxen hair of a dead girl, shot during a demonstration, and this hair for a long time spans the crevice between the two halves before falling into the breach. In narrative terms, the drawbridge has been raised by the police in order to cut off retreating workers from their quarters, but Eisenstein turns the event into a poetic metaphor by lingering on the slowly widening gulf between the two sides and by drawing out the moment of their separation far beyond the time it would take in reality. In its publicly released form, *October* does appear to be, as its critics charged, excessively formalistic—concerned more with the intricacies of its own cinematic mechanisms


ВЛАСТЬ СОВЕТАМЪ

(left) *October* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1928).

than with its revolutionary content. Eisenstein's notion, of course, was that concrete images properly arranged can *suggest* abstract ones, and this is true. Yet all available evidence indicates that the technique of intellectual montage will work only when it is firmly grounded in some specific narrative or dramatic context. When intellectual montage usurps its narrative context, as it often does in *October*, it tends to create a class of non-referential symbols that have meaning neither as abstractions nor as objects.

Eisenstein after *October*

Eisenstein's next film was a continuation of a project begun just prior to the commissioning of *October*. Initially titled *The General Line* (*General'naiia liniia*)—that is, the "general line" or policy of the Communist Party—and renamed *Old and New* (*Staroe i novoie*, 1929) when Stalinist bureaucrats disavowed it, the film was conceived by Eisenstein as a lyrical hymn of praise, in semi-documentary form, to the collectivization of Soviet agriculture. Like all Eisenstein films, *Old and New* was carefully researched and shot mainly on location, and as with *October*, Eisenstein used it as a laboratory for experiment—this time not with "intellectual" but with "overtonal" montage, and much more successfully than before. According to this technique, which Eisenstein also called "polyphonic montage" and "the filmic fourth dimension," a film is assembled through the harmonic orchestration of tonal dominants—that is, through what André Bazin would later term mise-en-scène, as opposed to wholly analytic editing.



The General Line, renamed *Old and New* (*General'naiia liniia*; renamed *Staroe i novoie*; Sergei Eisenstein, 1929).

Sounding like one of his Italian neorealist successors, Eisenstein wrote that his purpose in *Old and New* was "to exalt the pathos of everyday existence." However, when the film was completed in the spring of 1929, Soviet officials were dissatisfied, and Eisenstein was forced to shoot another ending at Stalin's command. This reaction portended serious trouble for Eisenstein, but in 1929, he stood at the height of his international fame, and the party could not afford to overlook the prestige he was bringing to the Soviet Union from all parts of the globe.

With *Old and New*, Eisenstein had taken the silent film form about as far as it would go, just as six years earlier he had reached the outer limits of the legitimate stage and "fallen into the cinema." Eisenstein was an internationally acclaimed master with several huge successes to his credit, and many people throughout the West looked to him as the supreme arbiter of cinematic form. Accordingly, in August 1929, at the age of thirty-one, Eisenstein was sent by Soiuzkino (together with scenarist Alexandrov and cinematographer Eduard Tisse) to study the cinemas of Western Europe and especially the United States. For much of 1930, he worked on several abortive projects for Paramount before journeying to Mexico to shoot his remarkable unfinished epic, *¡Que viva México!* (1931–1932). Eisenstein's American sojourn marked his first practical encounter with the new technology of sound recording and the beginning of a series of tragic complications that would plague him until his early death in 1948.

Vsevolod Pudovkin

Vsevolod I. Pudovkin (1893–1953), the second great director of the Soviet silent cinema, had been trained as a chemist, but he decided to renounce his profession and become a filmmaker after seeing D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* in Moscow in 1920. He joined the Moscow Film School and spent two years as a member of the Kuleshov Workshop, where he participated in the famous editing experiments described earlier in this chapter. It was Pudovkin's first dramatic feature film, *Mother* (*Mat*, 1926), that thrust him into the international limelight as Eisenstein's closest Soviet rival.

Loosely adapted by Pudovkin and the scenarist Nathan Zarkhi, another frequent collaborator, from Maxim Gorki's novel of the same title, and photographed by Golovnia, *Mother* is set during the 1905 Revolution. It tells the story of a politically oppressed woman married to a brutal (and brutalized) drunkard who works with their son, Pavel, in a factory. The family leads a life of abject poverty, and to finance his drinking, the father joins the ranks of the Black Hundreds, a counterrevolutionary goon squad in the pay of the tsarist government. During a violent confrontation between striking workers and the Black Hundreds in the factory yard, the father discovers that Pavel is one of the strikers. They fight, and the father is accidentally killed by one of Pavel's friends. Later, the police come to Pavel's home searching for weapons, and the mother, in her naïveté, betrays her son, believing that he will be exonerated. Instead, Pavel is arrested and sentenced to prison in a rigged trial; the mother is first anguished and then radically politicized by this experience of tsarist tyranny. She maintains close contact with Pavel's friends and later helps him escape from jail. At the conclusion of the film, they meet again, on May Day, at the head of a workers' demonstration. A regiment of Cossacks attacks the demonstrators, and mother and son die heroically confronting tsarist tyranny.

Mother enjoyed immediate international success similar to that of *Potemkin*, and for some of the same reasons. It is a beautifully proportioned film, carefully photographed by Golovnia and brilliantly edited by Pudovkin. Its action proceeds rhythmically through four symmetrical parts, and its montage effects are masterfully controlled. Yet *Mother* is in many ways a quieter, less spectacular film than its predecessor. Though it is essentially a political parable dealing with violent action, it eschews the epic proportions of *Potemkin* to concentrate on the human drama played out against the backdrop of a great historical moment. Eisenstein's film was about that moment itself, Pudovkin's about the people caught up in it. This is the pattern that appeared throughout Pudovkin's silent films and that above all others made them more popular with the Soviet masses than Eisenstein's. Whereas Eisenstein was the grand master of the mass epic, Pudovkin's approach to filmmaking was more personal.

Yet despite the more direct emotional appeal of his film, Pudovkin's montage was every bit as sophisticated as that of Eisenstein, from whom he and all Soviet filmmakers had learned a great deal (Pudovkin always said that the second major film experience of his life, after *Intolerance*, was *Potemkin*). Some of the great montage sequences from *Mother* include that in which the mourning mother keeps vigil over her husband's corpse while water drips slowly into a bucket beside her; Pavel's lyrical fantasy of escape from prison, in which images of spring coming to the land are intercut with his smiling face; and Pavel's actual escape from prison



Alexander Chistyakov and Vera Baranovskaya in *Mother* (*Mat*; Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1926).

over the ice floes, which eventually modulates into the concluding massacre. The sequence on the ice derives from Griffith's *Way Down East* (1920) rather than from Gorki's novel, but Pudovkin reveals the heritage of the Kuleshov Workshop by making the montage metaphorically, as well as narratively, functional. As the sequence begins, ice cakes floating downriver are intercut with workers marching toward the factory and their heroic confrontation with the troops. As the river becomes more and more clogged with ice, the ranks of the workers swell, until they overflow the curbs of the street. The narrative function of the ice floes becomes apparent when we see that the river runs past the prison and will provide Pavel with the medium for his escape. He joins the marchers on the opposite bank by leaping across the floes like the hero at the climax of *Way Down East*, but the metaphorical function of the sequence reasserts itself as the floes smash suddenly and violently into the piers of a stone bridge—the very bridge on which moments later the workers will clash head-on with the troops. The complex montage of the massacre itself, second only to the Odessa-steps sequence of *Potemkin* in conveying the plight of individuals caught up in violent action, provides an emotionally gripping, revolutionary climax to an intensely affecting film.

From the foregoing account, it should be clear that Pudovkin's montage, even at its most symbolic, usually serves some narrative purpose. Unlike Eisenstein, Pudovkin rarely engaged in intellectual abstraction. He had good theoretical reasons for this, believing that the process of montage operated differently from the way Eisenstein conceived it. For Pudovkin, the key process of montage was not collision, but **linkage**. As he wrote in the introduction to the German edition of his book *Film Technique and Film Acting* (1926; trans. Ivor Montagu, London, 1950): "The expression that the film is 'shot' is entirely false, and should disappear from the language. The film is not *shot*, but *built*, built up from the separate strips of celluloid that are its raw material."

Thus, Pudovkin chose an architectonic model for film structure and Eisenstein a dialectical one, though in practice both frequently mixed effects. Ultimately, however, the argument between Eisenstein and Pudovkin was less about the formal aspects of montage than about the psychology of the viewer, with Eisenstein believing that cinematic meaning is generated through the cognitive collision of frames within the viewer's mind and Pudovkin that it is generated through the cognitive linkage of frames. The opposition between these two points of view has never been resolved, and it will not be until we know a good deal more about the processes of perception involved in watching films. By August 1928, however, confronted with the imminent introduction of sound, Eisenstein and Pudovkin had managed to resolve their aesthetic differences sufficiently to issue a joint manifesto (with Grigori Alexandrov) endorsing the use of asynchronous (or contrapuntal) sound, as opposed to lip-synchronized dialogue (or synchronous sound), which they correctly saw as a threat to the art of montage as practiced in the silent film.

Pudovkin's next film, like Eisenstein's *October*, was commissioned by the Central Committee to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. It was titled *The End of St. Petersburg* (*Koniets Sankt-Peterburga*, 1927), and as he had done in *Mother*, Pudovkin also makes use of expressive camera angles in the manner of Griffith. When the boy comes to St. Petersburg for the first time, the camera observes him from an extremely high angle, so that he seems dwarfed by the great buildings and monuments of the city. Yet when he returns as a Bolshevik soldier at the conclusion of the film to storm the Winter Palace, the angles are effectively reversed (as is his implied stature relative to the city). *The End of St. Petersburg*, which, unlike Eisenstein's film, was completed and released on schedule, was successful in the Soviet Union and was hailed as a masterpiece abroad. Many critics today consider it superior to Eisenstein's film as an analysis of the Revolution, although *October* is such a singular and eccentric work that it is difficult to compare them.

Pudovkin's last great silent film, *Heir to Genghis Khan* (*Potomok Chingis-Khana*, also known as *Storm over Asia*, 1928), continued the narrative pattern begun in *Mother*, in which a politically naïve person is galvanized into radical action by tsarist tyranny. *Heir to Genghis Khan*, however, is set in Soviet Central Asia in 1920, and its protagonist is a Mongol trapper who is exploited not by Russians, but by the foreign armies of intervention that fought against the Red Army in Asia during the civil war. The Mongol accepts his role at first but ultimately realizes that he is being used to oppress his own people, and he turns against the British with a fury that assumes nearly cosmic proportions as the film concludes: like Samson, Bair literally pulls the British headquarters down on the heads of his captors; then he leaps onto a pony and gathers an impossibly vast horde of Mongol horsemen, who ride in wave after wave after wave against the British oppressors, becoming finally an apocalyptic windstorm that hurls the interventionists helplessly about and literally blows them from the face of the land.

This magnificent symbolic conclusion initially contained hundreds of shots (some prints derived from the German version shorten it to twenty-seven). It was roundly attacked by literal-minded critics who considered it unrealistic—which, of course, it was meant to be—and insufficiently ideological. Critics also found fault with the luxuriant pictorial beauty of the film, and Pudovkin's next film, an attempt to put his theory of contrapuntal sound into practice, was a failure. Titled *A Simple Case* (*Prostoi sluchai*, 1932), it was a very subjective love story told in impressionistic bits and pieces that seems much closer to Eisenstein's theories than to Pudovkin's own earlier films. *A Simple Case* was released briefly, after much reworking, in a silent print only, and Pudovkin was publicly charged with formalism, signaling again that the great experimental period of Soviet art was drawing to a close. Though Pudovkin managed to weather the storm of criticism that was about to engulf the great montage artists of the Soviet cinema—he went on to make several respected sound films (*Deserter* [*Dezertir*, 1933]; *Suvorov* [co-directed with Mikhail Doller, 1941])—he would never again achieve the stature of his three silent masterpieces, owing to the constant interference of party bureaucrats.

Alexander Dovzhenko

The third major artist of the Soviet silent film, and perhaps the most unconventional, was Alexander Dovzhenko (1894–1956). The son of Ukrainian peasants, Dovzhenko had been a teacher, a diplomat, a political cartoonist, and a painter before joining the Odessa Studios in 1926 at the age of thirty-two. Like Griffith, he knew little about cinema when he began his career in it, and his first three productions for Odessa were highly derivative of the American slapstick comedies then popular with Soviet audiences.

In 1928, however, he made a film that revealed a remarkable depth of poetic feeling and that was so technically unconventional that officials of the Ukrainian Film Trust asked Eisenstein and Pudovkin to preview it in order to certify its coherence. The film was *Zvenigora*, a boldly stylized series of tales about a hunt for an ancient Scythian treasure. The tales are set at four different stages of Ukrainian history, enabling Dovzhenko to contrast the region's past and present and to formulate a contemporary political allegory; Eisenstein and Pudovkin immediately recognized its importance. *Arsenal* is an epic film poem about the effects of revolution and civil war on the Ukraine. Beginning with the world war and ending in a violent strike by workers at a munitions factory in Kiev, the film does not so much tell a story as create an extended visual metaphor for revolution, encompassing the nightmarish horrors of war, the miseries of economic oppression, and finally, the ineradicable spirit of freedom in the hearts of the Ukrainian people. Structurally, *Arsenal* provides a synoptic view of the Bolshevik Revolution in the Ukraine through a series of imagistic vignettes in which history, caricature, folklore, allegory, and myth are combined. In the beautifully composed frames of cameraman Danylo Demutsky (1893–1954), people not only live and die, but horses talk, portraits come to life, and at the end of the film, the protagonist himself bares his breast to volley after volley of reactionary bullets and miraculously continues to stand, a symbol of the irrepressible revolutionary spirit.

Dovzhenko's next film, *Earth* (*Zemlia*, 1930), is universally acknowledged to be his masterpiece. Though its scant plot concerns a commonplace manifestation of the class struggle, the film is essentially a nonnarrative hymn to the continuity of life and death in Dovzhenko's beloved Ukraine. It is a rare film of mysterious beauty that perpetually transcends its contemporary political context to exalt the everlasting fecundity of the soil and the inevitable cyclic recurrence of birth, life, love, and death. Though it was later twice voted among the twelve greatest films of all time by panels of international film experts, when first released, *Earth* was poorly received by Soviet critics, who denounced it as "defeatist," "counterrevolutionary," and in one case, "fascistic." Dovzhenko's domestic reputation, like those of Eisenstein and Pudovkin, was about to enter a period of political eclipse. After a self-imposed hiatus of nearly two years, Dovzhenko readily adapted his talents to the new demands of the sound film (*Ivan*, 1932; *Aerograd*, 1935; *Shchors*, 1939), but increasing pressure to conform to the party line made it impossible for him to reach the lyric heights of *Arsenal* and *Earth* ever again, even though for the rest of his life he courageously continued to try.

Socialist Realism and the Decline of Soviet Cinema

The fate of the Revolution was also the fate of the Soviet cinema, whose decline coincided with the coming of sound but was not directly attributable to it. Some Soviet directors, of course, had difficulty adjusting to the new technology of sound, but on the whole, its arrival was greeted enthusiastically as a means of expanding the medium's artistic potential. Dziga Vertov had eagerly anticipated the introduction of sound since the mid-1920s; in August 1928, Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Alexandrov published a manifesto collectively endorsing the creative use of sound in motion pictures; and Eisenstein, Alexandrov, and Tisse journeyed to Western Europe and America in 1929 and 1930, where they were able to investigate developments in the sound film firsthand. The truth seems to be that the Golden Age of Soviet cinema, like that of German cinema, came to an end as much for political reasons as for technological ones.

At the fifteenth Communist Party Congress in 1927, Iosif Stalin, who had been the general secretary of the Central Committee since 1922, succeeded in outmaneuvering his opponents to become dictator of the Soviet Union for the next twenty-six years. Unlike his predecessors, Lenin (died 1924) and Trotski (exiled 1929), Stalin and many of the men who surrounded him were insular, provincial, and highly intolerant of the arts—especially of the avant-garde experiments of the previous decade. As a ruthlessly practical politician, Stalin recognized the enormous importance of film as a means of mass communication, but whereas Lenin had said, "The cinema is for us the most important of the arts," Stalin was more blunt: "The cinema," he wrote, "is the greatest medium of mass agitation. The task is to take it into our hands." And this is precisely what happened.

At the sixteenth Party Congress in 1928, Stalin demanded greater state control of the arts to make them both more accessible and more relevant to the masses. In 1929, Stalin removed Sovkino from Anatoli Lunacharski's authority in the Commissariat of Education (Lunacharski resigning as commissar shortly thereafter) and placed it under the direct control


АВТОР РЕЖИССЕР О. ДОВЖЕНК
ЗЕМЛЯ
ОПЕРАТОР Д. ДЕМУЦКИЙ

of the Supreme Council of the National Economy. Reorganized as "Soiuzkino" (an acronym for All-Union Combine of Cinema-Photo Industries) in 1930, the film trust was turned over to the doctrinaire bureaucrat Boris V. Shumiatski, who openly discouraged all manner of "formalism," symbolism, and montage experiment in favor of didactic plots and, ultimately, blatant propaganda.

In 1933, Soiuzkino was itself reorganized as the main Administration of the Cinema-Photo Industry, with Shumiatski as central manager. In 1936, Shumiatski was also made head of the Motion-Picture Section of the Committee on Art Affairs, which gave him near-dictatorial control of the Soviet film industry until he was purged in 1938. Where Lunacharski had suggested, Shumiatski decreed, and as the Soviet leadership grew more and more authoritarian, the arts were pushed increasingly toward the narrow ideological perspective known as **socialist realism**.

Socialist realism was a prosaic and heavy-handed brand of didacticism that idealized the Soviet experience in order to inspire the masses with the glories of life under Lenin and, especially, Stalin. The guiding principle was that individual creativity should be subordinated to the political aims of the state and that the present should be interpreted in the light of the future predicted by the current party line. Socialist realism was officially defined as the "artistic method whose basic principle is the truthful, historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development, and whose most important task is the Communist education of the masses." It was, in other words, an artistic method that demanded the "socialization" of Soviet art as a propaganda medium for Communist Party policy. Because that policy shifted with expediency, the doctrine could only be contextually defined.

In general, however, socialist realism involved an extreme literal-mindedness that eschewed the "symbolic" and the "psychological" for simple narratives centering on representative Soviet heroes and, rarely, heroines. (During the 1930s and the 1940s, it was often true that these heroes physically resembled Stalin.) When socialist realism was declared the official style of all Soviet art at the first Congress of the Soviet Writers Union in 1934, the genius of Soviet cinema was destroyed, because anything unique, personal, or formally experimental was explicitly forbidden to appear on the screen.

In 1933, immediately following the de facto imposition of socialist realism, Soviet film production fell to its lowest level in a decade; only fifty-three features were completed, as compared with 119 the year before. Shumiatski blamed the transition to sound, but confusion and fear in the studios were equally responsible. Tragically, if characteristically, it was the founders of Soviet cinema who were most injured by this reactionary decree. Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovzhenko, Kuleshov, and Vertov were all variously denounced and, in some cases, publicly humiliated for their past "formalist aberrations." They continued to work under the burden of official disfavor for the rest of their lives, their visions and their methods straitjacketed by Stalinist paranoia from that time forth. With the sole exception of Eisenstein, none of them produced work in the sound era equal to their greatest silent films because (as the Nazis would discover almost simultaneously with the Stalinists) art shackled by ideology ceases to be art and becomes something else. Great art may sometimes be ideological, as *Potemkin*, *Mother*, and *Arsenal* clearly illustrate, but ideology in the service of itself alone can never be great art.

Stalinism continued to cripple the Soviet film industry long after the death of its namesake on March 5, 1953. In fact, with varying degrees of intensity, Soviet cinema remained in its repressive grip until the advent of glasnost in 1985–1986, and socialist realism was not categorically rejected as the official style of Soviet film art until a unanimous vote by the membership of the Filmmakers Union in June 1990, a mere year and a half before the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself.

(left) Poster for *Earth* (*Zemlia*; Alexander Dovzhenko, 1930).



Charlie Chaplin in *The Gold Rush* (1925).



06

Hollywood in the Twenties

By the end of World War I, the American film industry had assumed the structure it would retain for the next forty years. The independent producers, led by Adolph Zukor, William Fox, and Carl Laemmle, had triumphed over the monopolistic Motion Picture Patents Company to become vertically integrated monopolies themselves, controlling their own theater chains and distributorships.

With the refinement of the feature film, motion-picture audiences became increasingly middle class, and exotic "atmospheric" theaters that could seat up to 3,000 patrons spread to cities small and large across the country. Thanks to increased film length, monetary inflation, and the monumental salaries newly commanded by stars, production budgets rose by as much as ten times their prewar level, and the movies became a major national industry in the span of several years. Filmmaking practices and narrative formulas were standardized to facilitate mass production, and Wall Street began to invest heavily in the industry for both economic and political gain (i.e., it was in the material interest of the wealthy and the powerful to have the new mass medium of the movies—and later of radio—under their control). New money, new power, and the "new morality" of the postwar Jazz Age all combined to make Hollywood in the 1920s the modern Babylon of popular lore.

The industry giants at the beginning of the 1920s, known collectively as the "Big Three," were Zukor's Famous Players–Lasky Corporation, which had acquired Paramount Pictures as its distribution and exhibition wing in 1916



Inceville (c. 1914).

and was commonly known as Paramount; Loew's Inc., the national theater chain owned by Marcus Loew that had moved into production with the acquisition of Metro Pictures in 1920; and First National (after 1921, Associated First National), the company founded in 1917 by twenty-six of the nation's largest exhibitors to combat the practice of block booking (invented by Zukor) by financing its own productions. United Artists was formed in 1919 by the era's four most prominent film artists—D. W. Griffith, Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks—in order to produce and distribute their own films. It was a major force in the industry until the advent of sound (and became so again in the 1970s). Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer emerged as a powerful new studio in 1924 through the merger of Metro Pictures, Goldwyn Pictures, and Louis B. Mayer Productions, under the auspices of Loew's Inc.

Hollywood's second string in the 1920s, the "Little Five," consisted of the Fox Film Corporation; Producers Distributing Corporation (PDC); Film Booking Office (FBO); Carl Laemmle's Universal Pictures; and Warner Bros. Pictures, which would force the industry to convert to sound by introducing the Vitaphone process in 1926 and would absorb First National in the process. Below these were about thirty thinly capitalized minor studios, of which only Columbia, Republic, and Monogram survived the coming of sound.

Thomas Ince, Mack Sennett, and the Studio System of Production

It was in the 1920s that the studios became great factories for the large-scale production of mass commercial entertainment, and this was mainly due to the example of Thomas Harper Ince (1882–1924) during the previous decade. Like Griffith, Ince had begun his career as an actor-director at American Biograph in 1910 and ultimately established his own studio, Inceville, in the Santa Ynez Canyon near Hollywood in 1912. Here, Ince directed more than a hundred films, ranging in length from two to five reels, before turning exclusively to production in late 1913.

Between 1914 and 1918, he built Inceville into the first recognizably modern Hollywood studio, complete with five self-contained shooting stages; his mode of production became the prototype for the highly organized studio system that was to dominate the American film industry for the next forty years. Ince's practice was to set up a number of production units on his lot, each headed by a director. Writers, working in close collaboration with both Ince and the directors, would prepare detailed shooting scripts in which the entire production was laid out, shot by shot. Ince would then approve the script, and the film would go into production according to a strict timetable. When the shooting was finished, Ince would supervise the editing and retain authority over the final cut. This kind of filmmaking was very much the opposite of Griffith's mode of improvisation, but it represented the wave of American cinema's heavily capitalized future, and it helps explain why Griffith was not to be a part of that future for very long. Still, Ince was like Griffith in his genius for visualizing narrative, and most of his productions—the vast majority of them action-packed Westerns—tended to be well-paced, tightly constructed features that bore the strong stamp of his personality.

Ince and Griffith actually became business partners for several years with Mack Sennett in the ill-fated Triangle Film Corporation, founded by Harry Aitken after he left Mutual in 1915. In conception, this organization was sound: each of the three directors would supervise the production of the type of films that

made him famous—action and Westerns for Ince, two-reel slapstick comedies for Sennett, and melodrama and spectacle for Griffith. In practice, Triangle failed after three years due to miscalculation of the public's taste and misguided attempts to bring stars of the legitimate stage to the screen.

When the failure occurred, Ince built himself a large new studio at Culver City (which would become the physical plant of MGM some ten years later) and continued to produce features there until his death in 1924. In the course of his career, Ince had introduced the detailed **scenario**, or **continuity script**, to the film-making process and pioneered the studio system of production. He had also given many talented actors and directors their first important opportunities to work in film: William S. Hart, Sessue Hayakawa, Billie Burke, Frank Borzage, Henry King, Lloyd Ingraham, Fred Niblo, Rowland V. Lee, Lambert Hillyer, and Francis Ford all trained at Inceville. Finally, as a director, Ince had contributed to the cinema a number of tautly constructed feature films in several genres, such as *The Battle of Gettysburg* (1913), *Civilization* (1916), *The Patriot* (1916), and *Anna Christie* (1923), which are, for the most part, models of fast-paced and economical narrative form.



George Fisher as The Christ intervenes in *Civilization* (Reginald Barker, Thomas H. Ince, et al., 1916).



Poster of Norma Talmadge in *Fifty-Fifty* (Allan Dwan, 1916), a Triangle Film produced by D. W. Griffith.

Another architect of the American studio system, and the founder of silent screen comedy, was Ince's and Griffith's partner in the Triangle Film Corporation, Mack Sennett (1880–1960). Sennett had worked as an actor in many of Griffith's Biograph films and set himself consciously to study the director's methods. He, too, began to direct films for Biograph in 1910 but was given very little creative freedom. So, in September 1912, Sennett founded the Keystone Film Company in Fort Lee, New Jersey, and within the month he had moved his company to the old Bison studios in Hollywood.

Here, between 1913 and 1935, he produced thousands of one- and two-reel films and hundreds of features that created a new screen genre—the silent slapstick comedy—that was to become the single most vital American mode of the 1920s. Influenced by circus, vaudeville, burlesque, pantomime, the comic strip, and the chase films of the French actor Max Linder, Sennett's Keystone comedies posited a surreal and anarchic universe where the logic of narrative and character was subordinated to purely visual humor of a violent but fantastically harmless nature. It is a world of inspired mayhem—of pie-throwing, cliff-hanging, auto-chasing, and preeminently, blowing things up.



The Keystone Kops (c.1914).

The slam-bang comic effect of these films depended on rapid-fire editing and the "last-minute rescue," as learned from Griffith, and also on Sennett's own incredibly accurate sense of pace. He had a genius for timing movement, both the frenetic physical activity that filled the frames of his films and the breathless editing rhythms that propelled them forward at breakneck speed. Sennett's films often parodied the conventions of other films, especially those of Griffith (e.g., *Teddy at the Throttle*, 1917), or satirized contemporary America's worship of the machine (*Wife and Auto Trouble*, 1916). Just as often, they would develop a single improvised sight gag involving the Keystone Kops or the Sennett Bathing Beauties into a riotous series of visual puns whose only logic was associative editing.

In the first two years at Keystone, Sennett directed most of his films himself, but after 1914, he adopted the Inceville model and began to function exclusively as a production chief in close association with his directors, actors, and writers. Unlike Ince, however, Sennett preferred simple story ideas to detailed shooting scripts, and he always left room in his films for madcap improvisation. The number of great comedians and directors who began their careers at Keystone is quite amazing. Sennett discovered and produced the first films of Charlie Chaplin, Harry Langdon, Fatty Arbuckle, Mabel Normand, Ben Turpin, Gloria Swanson, Carole Lombard, Wallace Beery, Marie Dressler, and W. C. Fields. He also provided the training ground for some of the most distinguished directors of comedy in American cinema: Chaplin and Keaton, of course, but also Malcolm St. Clair, George Stevens, Roy Del Ruth, and Frank Capra.

Furthermore, the enormous international popularity of Sennett's Keystone comedies contributed substantially to America's commercial dominance of world cinema in the years following World War I. Sennett's realization that the cinema was uniquely suited to acrobatic visual humor established a genre that in the 1920s would become perhaps the most widely admired and vital in the history of American film. Many serious critics, at least, regard it as such. And yet Sennett's conception of comedy was wed to the *silent* screen. Purely visual humor loses a great deal to the logic of language and naturalistic sound, and when silence ceased to be

an essential component of the cinema experience, the genre that Sennett had founded vanished from the screen. Sennett himself continued to make films after the conversion to sound, but by 1935 Keystone was bankrupt, and its founder did not produce another film before his death in 1960.

Charlie Chaplin

Sennett's most important and influential protégé was Charlie Chaplin (1889–1977). Chaplin, the son of impoverished British music hall entertainers, had spent his childhood on stage. Like Charles Dickens and D. W. Griffith, both of whom he greatly resembled, Chaplin's vision of the world was colored by a youth of economic deprivation, and he felt deeply sympathetic toward the underprivileged all of his life. Chaplin was already a performer on an American vaudeville tour when he was engaged by Keystone Films in 1913 for $150 a week. In his first film for Sennett, *Making a Living* (1914), he played a typical English dandy, but by his second, *Mabel's Strange Predicament* (1914), he had already begun to develop the character and costume of "the little tramp," which would become a kind of universal cinematic symbol for our common humanity and make Chaplin world-famous. He made thirty-four shorts and the six-reel feature *Tillie's Punctured Romance* (Mack Sennett, 1914) at Keystone, progressively refining the character of the sad little clown in oversized shoes, baggy pants, and an undersized coat and derby.

Yet Chaplin's gifts were meant for a more subtle style of comedy than the frenetic rhythms of the Keystone films allowed, so in 1915 he signed a contract with Essanay to make fourteen two-reel shorts for the then enormous sum of $1,250 a week. He directed these and all of his subsequent films himself, based on his experiences at Keystone, evolving his brilliant characterization of the little tramp, totally at odds with the world about him, through the exquisite art of mime. Chaplin's best Essanay films were *The Tramp*, *Work*, *The Bank*, and *A Night at the Show* (all 1915), and they made him so popular that in the following year he was able to command a star salary of $10,000 a week, plus a signatory bonus of $150,000 in a contract for twelve films with Mutual, of which the greatest are *The Floorwalker* (1916), *The Fireman* (1916), *One A.M.* (1916), *The Pawnshop* (1916), *The Rink* (1916), *Easy Street* (1917), *The Immigrant* (1917), and *The Adventurer* (1917). These two-reelers were produced with infinite care and constitute twelve nearly perfect masterpieces of mime.

They also made Chaplin internationally famous and first showed his great gift for social satire—a satire of the very poor against the very rich, of the weak against the powerful—which endeared him to the former but not to the latter, especially during the Depression. In *The Immigrant*, for example, one of the most memorable sequences is predicated on the hypocrisy





(top right) Charlie Chaplin and Marie Dressler in *Tillie's Punctured Romance* (Mack Sennett, 1914).

(bottom right) The arrival at Ellis Island in *The Immigrant* (Charlie Chaplin, 1917).



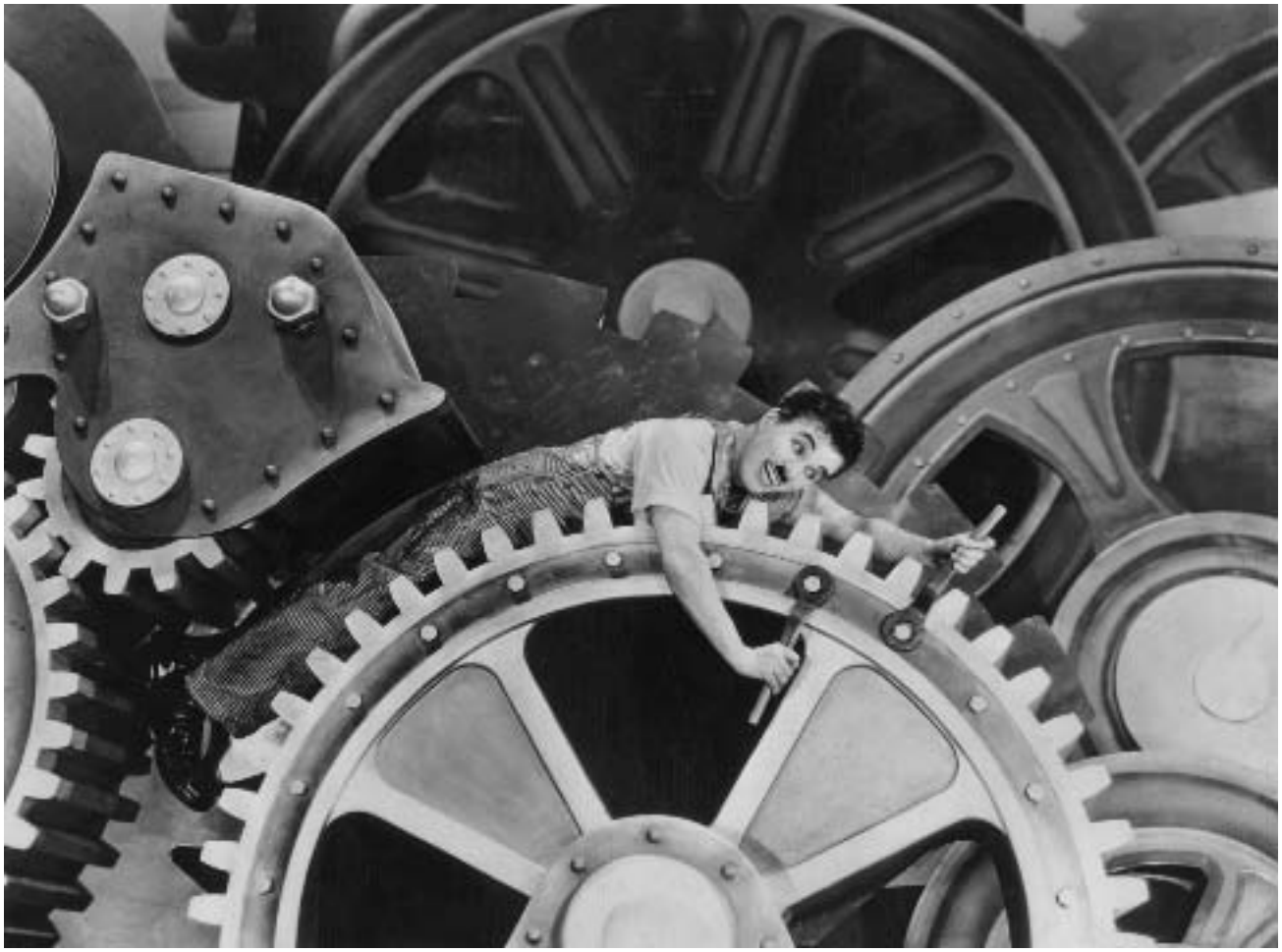
The Gold Rush (Charlie Chaplin, 1925).

of American attitudes toward immigration and on the brutality of the immigration authorities themselves. As Charlie's ship arrives at Ellis Island, he looks up with hope and pride at the Statue of Liberty. Then a title announcing "The Land of Liberty" is followed by a shot of the New York port police forcibly herding together a large number of immigrant families for processing like so many cattle. In the next shot, Charlie casts another glance at the Statue of Liberty—this one suspicious, even disdainful.

By June 1917, Chaplin had gained such star power that he was offered a $1 million contract with First National to produce eight films for the company, regardless of length. This deal enabled him to establish his own studios, where he made all of his films from 1918 until he left the country in 1952. His cameraman for all of these productions was Rollie Totheroh (1891–1967), whom he had first met in 1915 at Essanay. Most of Chaplin's First National films were painstakingly crafted two- and three-reelers that continued the vein of social criticism begun at Mutual.

Yet Chaplin's most successful effort for First National was the first feature-length film he directed, *The Kid* (1921). This was an autobiographical comedy/drama about the tramp's commitment to an impoverished little boy of the slums that combined pathos with tender humor and became an international hit, earning more than $2.5 million for its producers in the year of its release and making its child lead, the five-year-old Jackie Coogan, a star.

After he had fulfilled his obligation to First National, Chaplin was free to release his films through United Artists. His first United Artists film was the much-admired *A Woman of Paris* (1923), a sophisticated "drama of fate" whose subtle suggestiveness influenced filmmakers as diverse as Ernst Lubitsch and René Clair. Chaplin appeared only briefly as a porter in *A Woman of Paris*, which, like all of his films after 1923, was a full-length feature, but in his comic epic *The Gold Rush* (1925) he returned to the central figure of the little tramp. Set against the Klondike gold rush of 1898, this film manages to make high comedy out of hardship,



Modern Times (Charlie Chaplin, 1936).

starvation, and greed as three prospectors fight it out for the rights to a claim. In the subtlety of its characterization, the brilliance of its mime, and its blending of comic and tragic themes, *The Gold Rush* is Chaplin's most typical work. It is as popular today as it was in 1925, and it remained his personal favorite. *The Circus* (1928), in which the tramp attempts to become a professional clown, is a beautifully constructed silent film released during the conversion to sound. In honor of it, Chaplin was given a special award at the first Academy Awards ceremony in 1929 for "versatility and genius in writing, acting, directing, and producing."

Characteristically, Chaplin's first two sound films were produced with musical scores (written by Chaplin) and sound effects but little spoken dialogue: it was his way of extending the great art of silent mime into the era of sound. *City Lights* (1931) is a sentimental but effective film in which the unemployed tramp falls in love with a blind flower girl and goes through a series of misadventures, including robbery and a jail term, in order to raise money for the operation that can restore her sight. Chaplin called the film "a comedy romance in pantomime," and it is, but *City Lights* is also a muted piece of social criticism, in which the cause of the poor is defended against that of the rich.

If there were any remaining doubts about the nature of Chaplin's social attitudes, they were dispelled by *Modern Times* (1936), a film about the dehumanization of the common working man in a world run by machines for the wealthy. In it, Chaplin plays a factory worker who is fired when he suffers a nervous (but hilarious) breakdown on the assembly line, moves through a variety of other jobs, and ends up unemployed but undefeated. The film's satire on industrialization and inequity in the "modern times" of the Great Depression earned it little popularity among the powerful in the United States, where in some quarters it was called "Red propaganda," or in Germany and Italy, where it was banned. Yet *Modern Times* was enormously successful in the rest of Europe, and it remains today one of Chaplin's funniest, best structured, and most socially committed works.



Monsieur Verdoux (Charlie Chaplin, 1947).

In *The Great Dictator* (1940), Chaplin produced his first full talkie and one of the first anti-Nazi films to come out of Hollywood. A satire on European dictatorships, the film chronicles the rule of Adenoid Hynkel, dictator of Tomania, as he persecutes the Jews and plunges Europe into yet another war. Chaplin played the dual role of Hynkel and an amnesiac Jewish barber who is Hynkel's double. Released some eighteen months before Pearl Harbor, the film was not well received by the critics: many thought its politics too serious, others found them not serious enough. Still, *The Great Dictator* was a commercial hit, owing to its maker's continuing popularity as a star.

During the war, however, Chaplin gave a series of openly political speeches in support of the Soviet Union, which made him a prime candidate for the postwar blacklist. Worse, he became ensnared in a notorious paternity suit by a former "protégée" (Joan Barry) and was put on trial in 1944 for violating the Mann Act, a federal law that prohibited the interstate transport of women for the purposes of "prostitution . . . or any other immoral purpose."

Not unreasonably, Chaplin's next film, originally suggested to him by Orson Welles, was the dark and cynical *Monsieur Verdoux* (1947), "a comedy of murder" based on the exploits of the infamous French mass-murderer Landru. In it, a Parisian bank clerk (Chaplin) loses his job and takes up the practice of marrying and then murdering rich middle-aged women in order to support his invalid wife and small son. He is caught, and while awaiting execution, Verdoux states the film's theme concisely in a final interview with a reporter: "Wars, conflict, it's all business. One murder makes a villain; millions a hero. Numbers sanctify." The film was bitterly attacked in the United States, where it was released on the eve of the hysterical anticommunist witch hunts of the Cold War era; it was withdrawn from circulation after six weeks but had great success in France.

In his last American film, *Limelight* (1952), Chaplin returned to the London music halls of his childhood to tell the bittersweet tale of an aging performer who triumphs over his own declining power and imminent death by curing a young ballet dancer of paralysis and starting her on her career. The film is long (two and a half hours), slow, and cinematically archaic, but it is one of Chaplin's finest testaments to the dignity and decency of human nature, which he felt the twentieth century had done so much to destroy. In September 1952, Chaplin and his family were granted six-month exit visas to attend a royal premiere of *Limelight* in London. On the first day at sea, Chaplin received news by radio that the U.S. attorney general had rescinded his reentry permit, stating that he would have to submit to an interview regarding his political and moral views in order to secure his return. In this manner, the highest-paid and most popular star in the history of American film was forcibly ushered from his adopted country. Chaplin chose to take up residence in his homeland and, after January 1953, in Switzerland.

Five years later, he responded to the U.S. Justice Department with *A King in New York* (1957). This strained political parable, independently produced in England, is about a European head of state who, while visiting the United States, is ruined by the malicious charges of the House Un-American Activities Committee, as Chaplin himself had been.

Chaplin's last film was a limp bedroom farce, *A Countess from Hong Kong* (1967), starring Marlon Brando and Sophia Loren. The film is misconceived in terms of both script and direction, and it underscores the fact that Chaplin's greatest genius was as an actor and a mime. His sight gags turned on brilliantly conceived and executed camera blocking, and so long as his little tramp character stood at the center of his films, they were masterworks of comedy and pathos. When the tramp disappeared, the limitations of Chaplin's directorial ability became increasingly apparent. During the 1920s, however, the image of the little tramp became a worldwide symbol for the general excellence of the American cinema, and Chaplin himself will always remain one of its most important and distinguished directors.

Buster Keaton

It's useful to compare Chaplin's cinema with that of his fellow filmmaker and comic genius Buster Keaton (1895–1966). Like Chaplin, Keaton had been raised in vaudeville by his parents; he made his first stage appearance with them at the age of three. From his earliest youth, he was involved in solving complicated problems of mise-en-scène for the family act, and his later skill in direction may be traced to this experience.

Though his reputation was eclipsed by Chaplin's during the 1920s, it seems clear today that Keaton was Chaplin's equal as both an actor and a director. When the family act broke up in 1917, he decided to enter the movies by going to work as a supporting player at Joseph M. Schenck's Comique Film Corporation, which was formed in the spring of 1917 to produce the films of Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle for release through Paramount. Here, Keaton made fifteen two-reel shorts with Arbuckle—from *The Butcher Boy* in 1917 to *The Garage* in 1919—in which the quality of the studio's products improved and its sophistication increased notably, in both form and substance.

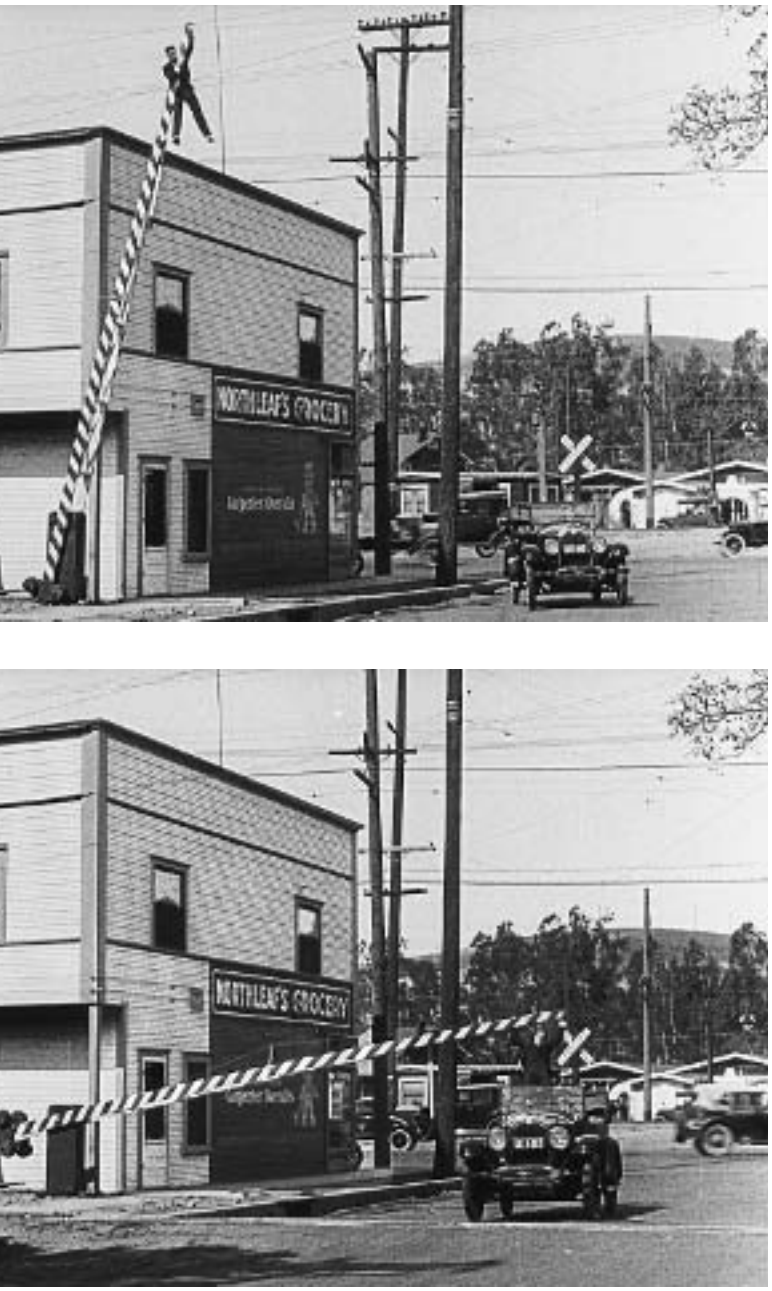
In late 1919, Schenck formed Buster Keaton Productions to produce two-reel comedy shorts starring Keaton, and he acquired the former Chaplin studios for that purpose. Schenck handled all of the financing but gave Keaton complete creative freedom in writing and directing at a salary of $1,000 per week, plus 25 percent of the profits. The resulting nineteen shorts, made between 1920 and 1923 and released through Metro and First National, represent, with Chaplin's Mutual films, the high point of American slapstick comedy. The best of them are films such as *One Week* (1920), *Cops* (1922), and *The Balloonatic* (1923), whose complexity of structure and fine visual sense make them unique among slapstick shorts.

Keaton always maintained that comedy must be funny without being ridiculous, and for this reason, he took great pains to make his films credible in dramatic as well as comic terms. Unlike Sennett and his many imitators, much of Keaton's excellence as a filmmaker stemmed from a strict adherence to the dramatic logic of his narratives and the use of gags that progress in a geometrical pattern grounded in character and plot. Keaton's first feature was the seven-reel *The Saphead*, directed by Herbert Blaché (1882–1953) for Metro late in 1920. By 1923, two-reelers were becoming increasingly unprofitable due to the public's mania for features, and Schenck changed the Keaton studio's production output from eight shorts to two independent features per year, to be distributed by Metro/MGM, but over which the filmmaker was to retain complete artistic control. Keaton's salary was raised to star level ($2,500 per week, plus 25 percent of the profits), and he entered the period of his greatest creativity.



Buster Keaton striking Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle instead of the strength tester in *Coney Island* (Roscoe Arbuckle, 1917).

It has been said that after 1923, Keaton was as important as any director practicing in Hollywood, and so strong was his creative personality that this is true even of the films that do not bear his name on the direction credits. His first independent feature for Keaton Productions, *The Three Ages* (1923), was a sparkling parody of Griffith's *Intolerance*, directed by Keaton in collaboration with Eddie Cline (1892–1961), that depicted the trials of courtship through the ages by intercutting stories from three separate historical periods: the Stone Age, ancient Rome, and contemporary America. *The Three Ages* is a successful comedy whose hilarious conclusion introduced a classic Keaton device—the "trajectory" gag, in which the perfect timing of acting, directing, and editing propels the



A trajectory gag from *Sherlock Jr.* (Buster Keaton, 1924).

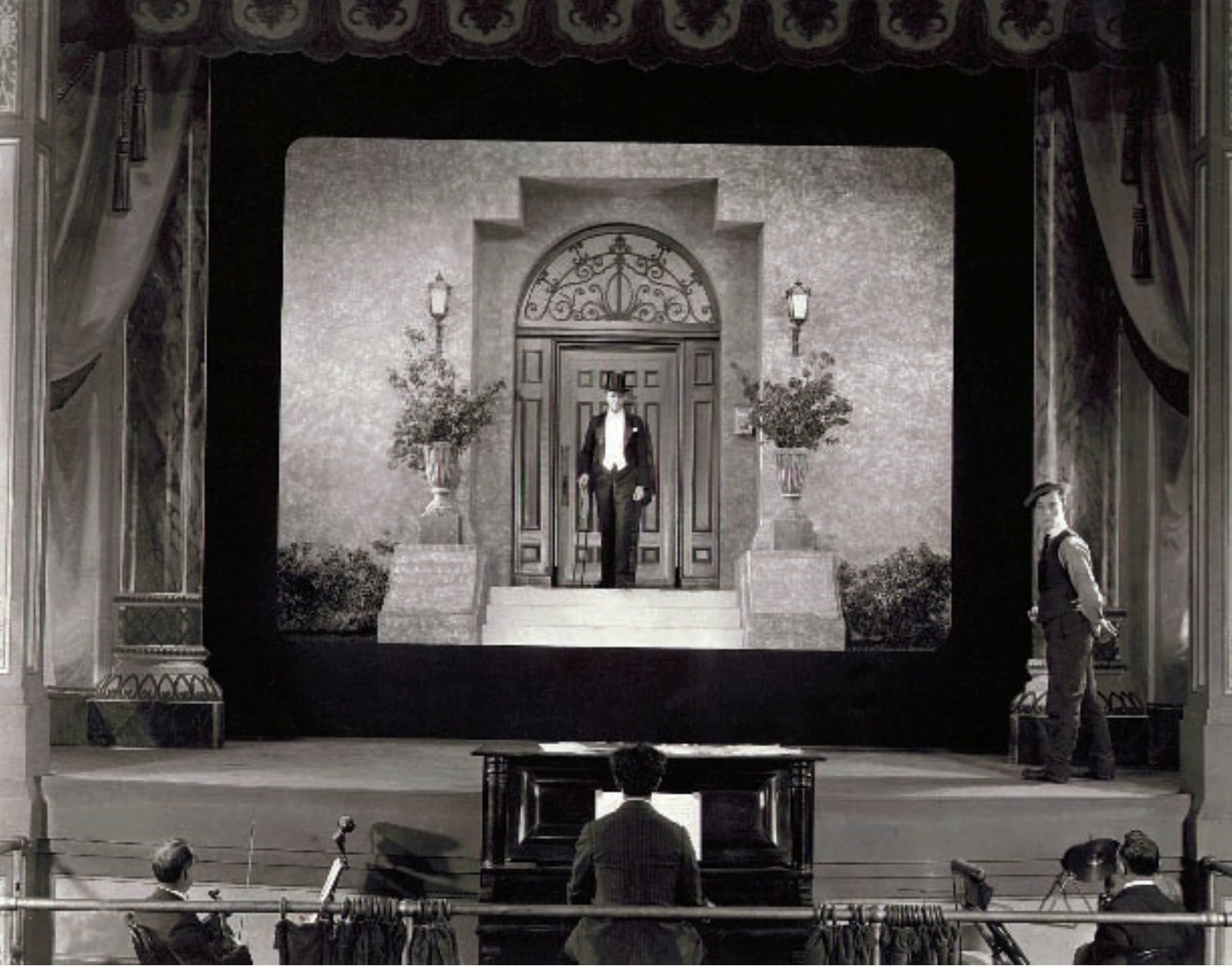
Keaton character through an extended series of dramatically connected sight gags, ending in the denouement of a sequence or of an entire film.

At the conclusion of the modern sequence of *The Three Ages*, for example, Keaton, in long shot, leaps from the fire escape of a six-story building toward an adjacent building, misses the ledge, and falls. A second long shot shows him falling through two canvas window awnings and catching hold of a third. In the next shot, Keaton uses the awning for ballast as he grabs hold of a drainpipe that comes loose in his arms. Another long shot shows him, still holding the pipe, pivoting into an open window two stories down. We cut here to a medium shot of the interior of a firehouse dormitory, with Keaton hurtling through the window, catching hold of the firemen's pole, and sliding down it. In the next shot, he arrives at the ground floor below and leaps onto the back of a fire engine about to answer an alarm. The final shot of the sequence shows Keaton arriving at a burning building and recognizing it as the police station from which he has just escaped as a wanted man. He slips quietly away, thus completing the trajectory.

Keaton's second independent feature, *Our Hospitality* (1923), represents a tremendous advance over *The Three Ages* and is one of his greatest films. Directed by Keaton in collaboration with Jack Blystone (1892–1938), it concerns a young man's involvement in a bloody family feud in the American South in the early days of the railroad. The film is a nearly perfect example of Keaton's ability to create serious narrative situations and then cause the gags to grow naturally out of them.

Sherlock Jr. (1924), directed and edited solely by Keaton, is perhaps his most extraordinary feature-length work. In it, Keaton plays a projectionist in a neighborhood theater who is accused of theft by his girlfriend's father. Later, he falls asleep at work, while a ghostly image of himself leaves the projection booth, walks through the auditorium below, and enters the screen to become a part of the action, which has been transformed into the real-life drama of the framing story. At first, Keaton is thrown out of the frame by the villain. As he scrambles back into it, the scene changes through a cut, and he is suddenly standing in front of a door. As he reaches to open it, the scene changes again, and he finds himself in a garden. As he tries to sit down on a garden bench, there is a cut to a crowded street scene, and Keaton tumbles into a stream of rushing traffic. This routine goes on for nearly three minutes before leading us into a more continuous dream narrative in which Keaton becomes Sherlock Jr. and clears himself of all false charges, finally waking to his girlfriend's embrace in the projection room. The film is full of breathtakingly complicated (and dangerous) trajectory gags, but the sequence that depicts a real person trapped inside a movie is in many ways a comment on the process of film editing itself; the French avant-garde director René Clair called attention to its surrealistic aspects as early as 1925 when he compared *Sherlock Jr.* to Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), a classic absurdist drama.

Keaton's next film, *The Navigator* (1924), directed in collaboration with Donald Crisp (1880–1974), was



Keaton about to enter a screen within the screen in *Sherlock Jr.* (Buster Keaton, 1924).

another virtuoso piece of sustained comic narrative. Unlike Chaplin, Keaton did not play the same character over and over again, but the narrative situation in which his characters find themselves was always pretty much the same: a vulnerable but plucky human hero, as in *The Navigator*, is confronted with some vast and seemingly insurmountable problem, usually involving objects and machines rather than other humans. It is a classical absurdist situation, and the comic effect arises from the hero's spirited but futile attempts to surmount the insurmountable, at which he ultimately—and for totally arbitrary reasons—somehow succeeds.

Seven Chances (1925), directed by Keaton, concerns a young man who stands to inherit a fortune if he can marry within twenty four hours. The news is made public, and Keaton soon finds himself being pursued through the Southern California hills by hundreds of rampaging prospective brides. The chase ends in one of Keaton's most striking and dangerous trajectories, as he is forced to run down the sheer face of a hill, dodging a landslide of 1,500 papier-mâché boulders that range in diameter from 1 to 8 feet. Once the sequence was set up, the rest was left to chance and to Keaton's great improvisatory talent as both director and performer: the conclusion of *Seven Chances* remains one of the most stunning of any slapstick comedy.

Keaton's next two films were somewhat gag-impoverished: *Go West* (1925), a parody of the popular Western genre, misfires through uncharacteristic

sentimentality and disunity, while *The Battling Butler* (1926) concludes with an unaccountably brutal fight sequence that reminds us that Keaton's comedy, like Chaplin's, could occasionally turn bitter, melancholy, and surprisingly unpleasant.

In 1926, Keaton returned to the top of his form with *The General*, which he directed in collaboration with his former scriptwriter Clyde Bruckman (1894–1955). Although it was poorly received by Keaton's contemporaries, many critics today link it with Chaplin's *The Gold Rush* (1925) as one of the two great comic epics of the cinema. Based on a real incident from the American Civil War in which Union undercover agents hijacked a Southern locomotive, *The General* achieved a nearly perfect integration of dramatic action and comedy. Keaton plays Johnny Gray, a civilian railroad engineer during the war who has been unjustly accused of cowardice. His locomotive, the General, and his fiancée are seized by Union spies and driven northward. Johnny single-handedly pursues the train into the heart of enemy territory; recaptures it, along with his fiancée; and speeds back to the South with what seems to be the entire Union army in hot pursuit. At Rock River, he burns a railroad bridge behind him and precipitates a spectacular comic catastrophe, as a Union locomotive hurtles onto the bridge, causing its collapse, and plunges 30 feet into the river, creating a huge geyser of smoke and steam.

In sheer pictorial beauty, *The General* surpasses even *Our Hospitality* (1923). Shot on location in the forests of Oregon, its battle scenes are lit and composed, like those of *The Birth of a Nation*, to resemble the Civil War photographs of Mathew Brady. As for comedy, the timing and structure of *The General*'s trajectories have never been equaled. The film seems to validate the statement by his biographer that Keaton "could perform miracles as easily as he breathed."

Keaton made only two more independent features—both distributed at a loss by United Artists—before his



studio was acquired by the MGM conglomerate. *College* (1927), co-directed with James W. Horne (1880–1942), is as crammed full of energetic gags and trajectories as any Keaton short. *Steamboat Bill Jr.* (1928), the last film Keaton produced himself, was one of his finest. The plot is classic Keaton: an effeminate youth returns from college to his burly father's Mississippi riverboat and falls in love with the daughter of his father's rival, wreaking havoc on both families. The film concludes with a spectacularly realized cyclone that blows away the whole town, a sequence that contains Keaton's most dangerous stunt: in the middle of the storm, an entire house front collapses on him, but he is saved by virtue of standing precisely at the point of a window opening in the façade, the frame clearing his head and body by inches on either side.

In 1928, Keaton allowed his company to be absorbed by MGM with the promise that Joseph Schenck's brother Nicholas, the newly installed president of Loew's Inc., would allow him to continue his creative mode of production. There was little hope that the promise would or could be kept within the factorylike system of the world's largest studio, and Keaton soon found his team of directors, writers, and technicians dispersed to work on other MGM projects. Keaton himself was cast in a film about a bumbling Hearst newsreel cameraman trying to win the hand of another Hearst employee (Hearst owned large shares of MGM stock, and his papers could be counted on for good reviews). The improbable result was *The Cameraman* (1928), Keaton's last great film, co-directed with Edward Sedgwick (1892–1953), which has been described as "a newsreel by Buster Keaton of a newsreel by Buster Keaton."

In many ways, *The Cameraman* is as self-reflexive as *Sherlock Jr.*, mixing documentary footage of real events with footage of dramatically staged events, and at some points, integrating the two completely—as when Keaton and his sweetheart are showered with confetti in a New York tickertape parade and the camera pulls back to reveal the world-famous aviator Charles Lindbergh, who had made the first transatlantic flight a year earlier, seated in the car behind them. Keaton's last silent feature, *Spite Marriage* (Edward Sedgwick, 1929), was a great popular success, even though it was released at the height of the public's new mania for sound. It contained a great many subtle gag routines growing out of the situation in which a lowly pants-presser marries a beautiful actress, but the film was not the equal of its predecessors and showed signs of interference by MGM executives.

There is no question that Keaton's talent could have survived and even profited from the conversion to sound, but in 1933, he was fired from the studio by vice president and general manager Louis B. Mayer. Keaton simply could not adapt to working within the restrictive environment of the studio system, and his unhappiness manifested in heavy drinking. His increasingly erratic behavior and long absences from the set caused costly production slowdowns, and Mayer finally decided to fire him on February 2, 1933. Simultaneously, his personal life fell apart, and although he played small parts in numerous talkies and appeared occasionally on television, his career as a filmmaker effectively ended in 1929.

It seems clear today that of the two great silent clowns, Chaplin and Keaton, Keaton had the stronger sense of narrative structure and mise-en-scène. His films as a director were often more formally beautiful than Chaplin's, and Keaton's technical genius for setting up and filming his strenuously elaborate gags, and the reckless physical courage with which he performed them, were extraordinary. Yet like Chaplin, Keaton was a magnificently subtle actor. His "great stone face" was actually capable of suggesting a vast range of emotion, and there was very little that he could not express with his body. Like Chaplin, Keaton knew that great comedy always exists close to the brink of tragedy, but sentimentality does not play an important part in Keaton's work, as it does in Chaplin's. For both artists, comedy was a strange blend of logic and fantasy in which the impossible was made to seem real. Keaton, however, seems to have best understood how dreamlike and surreal is the process of film itself.

(left) The collapse of the railroad bridge in *The General* (Clyde Bruckman and Buster Keaton, 1926).

Harold Lloyd and Others

Another important architect of silent comedy was Harold Lloyd (1893–1971). Lloyd was working as an extra for Universal Pictures in 1914 when he met Hal Roach Sr. (1892–1992), who was to become Sennett's only major rival in the production of comic shorts in the 1920s. Roach had just established his own production company on the basis of a $3,000 inheritance, and he hired Lloyd as a comic at $3 per week.

Between 1915 and 1917, Lloyd played tramp figures called "Lonesome Luke" and "Willie Work," who were



Harold Lloyd in *Safety Last* (Fred Newmeyer and Sam Taylor, 1923).

highly imitative of Chaplin's tramp. In a 1917 two-reeler titled *Over the Fence*, however, he discovered for the first time his very own comic persona: the earnest, mild-mannered boy next door with his horn-rimmed glasses. During the next decade, Lloyd developed this character into an archetype of American "normalcy" and niceness. Like all Americans, "Harold" was eager to succeed and could become quite aggressive in competition, but beneath it all there was a sound core of decency and innocence.

When he began to do feature work in the 1920s, Lloyd specialized in the "comedy of thrills"—a bizarre variant of Keystone mayhem in which the protagonist placed himself in real physical danger to elicit shocks of laughter from the audience. Lloyd's most famous film of this sort was *Safety Last* (directed by Fred Newmeyer and Sam Taylor, 1923), in which he scales the sheer face of a twelve-story building, apparently without safety devices, and ends up hanging more than a hundred feet above the rushing traffic, suspended from the hands of a large clock. By the mid-1920s, Lloyd had become more popular with American audiences in box-office terms alone than either Chaplin or Keaton.

Nevertheless, as with so many of the great silent clowns, his highly kinetic brand of humor did not survive the coming of sound, although he managed to make four sound films before retiring in 1952. Lloyd's comic genius had neither the intellectual depth of Keaton's nor the emotional depth of Chaplin's. Yet as a slam-bang, razzle-dazzle acrobat, Lloyd had no peers, and as Walter Kerr has put it, his comedy of pure sensation made a whole generation of Americans feel good about themselves.

Two other popular Hal Roach comedians were Stan Laurel (1890–1965) and Oliver Hardy (1892–1957). Laurel was an Englishman who had first come to America in the same vaudeville troupe as Chaplin and had become a minor comic star for a variety of studios in the teens. Hardy was a native of Georgia who made his living as a singer and a bit player until he was signed



Laurel and Hardy, with Mae Busch, in *Them Thar Hills* (Charles Rogers, 1934).

to a long-term acting contract by Roach in 1926. Laurel was signed shortly afterward, and in 1927, the two were teamed together in a two-reeler called *Putting the Pants on Philip* (Clyde Bruckman, 1927), initiating a comic partnership that lasted another twenty-five years. Between 1927 and 1929, Laurel and Hardy made twenty-seven silent shorts for Roach, and they became the first important comic team in the history of film.

Because Laurel and Hardy had both been trained for the stage, they made an easy transition to sound, and as a consequence of two-reel talkies such as *Hog Wild* (James Parrott, 1930), *Another Fine Mess* (James Parrott, 1930), and *Them Thar Hills* (Charles Rogers, 1934), the team became extremely popular in the 1930s. They also survived the inevitable conversion from shorts to features.

Although they frequently worked with such fine directors as George Stevens and Leo McCarey, Laurel was the guiding genius of the team. He wrote many of their scripts and produced some of their major films of the 1930s. The careers of Laurel and Hardy effectively ended after 1940, when they stopped working for Roach and were absorbed into the oligarchic studio system. At Fox and MGM, they were unable to shape their own material, and the features that they made after 1940 were weak attempts to recycle the great humor of their heyday.

Like Harold Lloyd's comedy, that of Laurel and Hardy was in the visually violent tradition of Keystone and usually ended in some form of anarchic destruction. Unlike the randomly organized Sennett shorts, however, Laurel and Hardy films always had a kind of structural logic, whereby a single misbegotten incident would be progressively multiplied toward some catastrophic infinity. As characters, both comedians were simply overgrown children whose naked aggression and vengefulness were mirrored in the middle-class

world about them. And the physical contrast they presented on the screen was undeniably funny. Laurel, the weak, whimpering, and barely coordinated little fool, and Hardy, the inept, self-important, and grossly inflated bully, offered a comic version of bourgeois stupidity that Flaubert might have admired.

Two other silent comics deserve mention here, although, like Laurel and Hardy, both are decidedly minor by comparison with Chaplin, Keaton, and Lloyd. Harry Langdon (1884–1944) came to work for Mack Sennett from vaudeville in 1924. In numerous shorts at Keystone between 1924 and 1926, he developed the haunting character of a middle-aged, baby-faced innocent whose pathetic naïveté was somewhat reminiscent of Chaplin without Chaplin's dignity.

Langdon rose briefly to stardom in a series of three popular features made between 1926 and 1928—*Tramp, Tramp, Tramp* (Harry Edwards, 1926), *The Strong Man* (Frank Capra, 1926), and *Long Pants* (Frank Capra, 1927). Because the first of these films was written, and the latter two were directed, by Frank Capra, it has been suggested that he alone was responsible for the appeal of Langdon's whimsical comic presence. Yet Langdon was a brilliant pantomimist in his own right, and there was something uncanny in his infantile foolishness that belonged exclusively to the character he first created at Keystone. Nevertheless, Langdon's own features as a director, *Three's a Crowd* (1927), *The Chaser* (1928), and *Heart Trouble* (1928), were not as successful as the Capra films, and his stardom did not survive the coming of sound, although he continued to work as a character actor until his death.

Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle (1887–1933), tipping the scales at 270 pounds, also began at Keystone, where he worked successfully with Chaplin from 1914 to 1916 and became Sennett's principal star after Chaplin's departure for Essanay. Arbuckle's comic appeal rested almost solely on the broad base of his fatness, his childishness, and a certain Sennettesque flair for mayhem; his popularity was second only to Chaplin's during the brief course of his career. In 1917, Joseph M. Schenck founded the Comique Film Corporation to produce Arbuckle's work, and Arbuckle gave his friend Buster Keaton his first job in films as a supporting player. In the earliest Arbuckle-Keaton collaborations, the latter was clearly the foil, but by 1919, Keaton had totally usurped Arbuckle as a comic talent. Arbuckle was still extremely popular and made eight successful features for Paramount between 1919 and 1921, when his career ended in a catastrophic scandal that rocked the movie industry and changed the course of Hollywood history.

Hollywood Scandals and the Creation of the MPPDA

Since the earliest days of the nickelodeon, moralists and reformers had agitated against the corrupting nature of the movies and their effects on American youth. Powerful pressure groups, often working through religious organizations, had been formed to protect American audiences from the display of morally pernicious materials on the screen. World War I, the coming of Prohibition, and increasing middle-class patronage of the movies had alleviated some of this tension, and after the war, the content of American films became increasingly sophisticated and risqué, reflecting the "new morality" of the Jazz Era—a compound of materialism, cynicism, and sexual license.

Simultaneously, the Hollywood of Babylonian legend was born of the impossibly extravagant production budgets and star salaries that mushroomed in the late teens—the Hollywood of baronial mansions, orgiastic parties, sexual promiscuity, and multiple divorces that has fascinated the American tabloid press from that day to our own. For a while, the stars were worshiped by the public from afar as a kind of new American royalty, a race of beautiful demigods basking in the sun-drenched splendors of Beverly Hills. Yet it transpired that many of the stars were human after all, and producers soon sought to play down the publicity given to their private lives, properly fearing a moralistic backlash against the amorality of their lifestyles, which frequently involved sex and the abuse of drugs and alcohol.

These fears were realized with a vengeance in September 1921, when Fatty Arbuckle was charged with the rape and murder of a young starlet named Virginia Rappe in the aftermath of a Labor Day weekend drinking party at a hotel suite in San Francisco. Arbuckle was indicted for manslaughter and stood trial three times before he was finally acquitted for lack of evidence in 1923. Miss Rappe had a history of peritonitis and had apparently died of a ruptured bladder aggravated by alcohol, but there were widespread allegations in the press that Arbuckle had raped her with a champagne bottle and crushed her beneath his great weight. Tabloids across the country portrayed him as a perverted beast, and the public outcry became so

(right) Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle with Mabel Normand in *He Did and He Didn't* (Roscoe Arbuckle, 1916).



violent during this period that his pictures had to be withdrawn from circulation. To appease the moralists, Paramount fired Arbuckle, who was permanently barred from working in the industry again, even after he was exonerated by the courts.

Yet Hollywood had more to account for than Fatty's indiscretions. During Arbuckle's second trial in February 1922, the chief director of Famous Players–Lasky and current president of the Screen Directors Guild, William Desmond Taylor (1877–1922), was found murdered in his Beverly Hills apartment. It seems that he had been conducting simultaneous affairs with the actress Mary Miles Minter (1902–1984) and the popular Keystone comedian Mabel Normand (1894–1930), who had been the last person to see him alive. Hungry for more scandal, the tabloid press implicated both women in the murder, although they were manifestly innocent, and destroyed their careers in the process. Within a year, Wallace Reid (1891–1923), a handsome actor who was a prototype of the clean-living American male, died of a drug overdose and was revealed to have been a long-term narcotics addict. These three scandals, as well as many smaller ones that were unearthed by the sensational press, produced a storm of public outrage against the depravity of Hollywood that was unprecedented in the film industry's brief history.

By early 1922, thirty-six states and the federal government were considering the enactment of censorship laws. The threat was rendered even more serious by a steep decline in film attendance in 1922, a result less of the scandals than of two new sources of competition for Americans' leisure time—the radio, which began commercial **broadcasting** in 1922, and the family automobile, which became available through installment credit loans at about the same time. In brief, 1922 was the dawning of the age of mass communications and mass consumption in America, and Hollywood, whose chief business was both, found itself in the embarrassing position of having deeply offended its audience.

Following the example of major-league baseball, which had recently whitewashed a national bribery scandal by appointing a conservative federal judge to oversee its operations, the frightened Hollywood producers formed a self-regulatory trade organization, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) in March 1922, amid much publicity, and hired president Warren G. Harding's postmaster general, Will Hays (1879–1954), for $150,000 a year to head it. Hays was an ultraconservative Republican and a Presbyterian elder from Indiana, and his presence made the film industry's gesture of self-censorship convincing to the public and the government alike.

Initially, the Hays Office, as the MPPDA came to be called for the next twenty-three years, was a public-relations and lobbying organization that engaged in little real censorship, although it did help producers compile a blacklist of 117 stars who were banned from the industry because of unfavorable publicity about their personal lives. There was a gently chiding "Purity Code," known facetiously as the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls," and producers were required to submit summaries of their screenplays to the Hays Office for approval. Yet the only "censorship" consisted of informal advising according to the principle of "compensating values," whereby, to paraphrase Arthur Knight, vice could be flaunted for six reels so long as virtue triumphed in the seventh.

The main task of the Hays Office in the 1920s was to stave off the threat of government censorship by mollifying pressure groups, managing news, deflecting scandal, and generally discouraging close scrutiny of the industry. In the early 1930s, when sound helped produce a new wave of excess in American films and touched off another round of national protest concerning the way in which the sounds of violence and vulgar language were exploited by early sound producers, the Hays Office became the medium for a very rigid form of censorship indeed, as administrator of the draconian "Production Code." In the 1920s, though, it merely provided whitewash for overly enthusiastic manifestations of the "new morality" and helped producers subvert the careers of stars whose personal lives might make them too controversial.

Cecil B. DeMille

The most successful and flamboyant representative of the "new morality" in all of its manifestations was Cecil B. DeMille (1881–1959). A virtual incarnation of the values of Hollywood in the 1920s, DeMille had an uncanny ability to anticipate the tastes of his audiences and give them what they wanted before they knew they wanted it. He began his career by directing *The Squaw Man* (1914), the first feature-length Western ever made in Hollywood, for Jesse Lasky's Feature Play Company. The film was a great popular and critical success, and DeMille followed it with a series of Western features (*The Virginian*, 1914; *Call of*



The Ten Commandments (Cecil B. DeMille, 1923).

the North, 1914) and stage adaptations (*Carmen*, 1915) that made him famous.

Like Griffith, DeMille had apprenticed in the melodramatic theatrical tradition of David Belasco, and these early films were striking for their expressive "Rembrandt" or "Lasky" lighting and vivid mise-en-scène. During the war, DeMille made a group of stirringly patriotic films and then shifted gears to pursue the postwar obsession with extramarital sex among the leisure class. In a series of sophisticated comedies of manners aimed directly at Hollywood's new middle-class audience, DeMille made the bathtub a mystic shrine of beauty and the act of disrobing a fine art, as "modern" marriages collapsed under the pressure of luxuriant hedonism. These films did not simply embody the values of the "new morality"; they also legitimized them and made them fashionable.

When the Hays Office was established, DeMille embraced the "compensating values" formula and made it uniquely his own in *The Ten Commandments* (1923), a sex- and violence-drenched religious spectacle that made him internationally famous. Costing more than $1.5 million to produce, with biblical sequences in two-color Technicolor, this film became one of the most profitable motion pictures of the era, and it offers a good example of the way in which the Hays Office worked to permit the lurid depiction of "sin," so long as it was shown to be ultimately punished. This successful formula for religious spectacle became a DeMille trademark, and he used it time and again during his

career—in *King of Kings* (1927), *The Sign of the Cross* (1932), *Samson and Delilah* (1949), and finally in his last film, *The Ten Commandments* (1956), a full-color widescreen remake of the prototype.

Yet DeMille excelled at other forms of spectacle as well. With the exception of a brief venture into independent production between 1925 and 1929, DeMille worked all of his life for some incarnation of Paramount—first the Lasky Feature Play Company, then Famous Players–Lasky, and finally Paramount itself after 1930. A frequent collaborator was the scenarist Jesse Lasky Jr. (1910–1988), son of the studio's co-founder, and in the sound era DeMille became closely identified with the Paramount "style."

A few of his films, such as *Male and Female* (1919) and *Union Pacific* (1939), are classics of their genres, but on the whole, DeMille was a great showman, rather than a great director, who incarnated the values of Hollywood in the 1920s and throughout his career. He was extravagant, flamboyant, and vulgar, but he possessed a remarkable instinct for the dualistic sensibilities (some would simply say "hypocrisy") of his middle-class American audiences, who paid by the millions for more than fifty years to sit through his kinetic spectacles of sex, torture, murder, and violence, so long as some pious moral could be drawn from them at the end.

The "Continental Touch": Lubitsch and Others

Another director of sophisticated erotica during the 1920s, but a filmmaker of much greater taste and refinement than DeMille, was Ernst Lubitsch. Lubitsch, a German Jew, was the genius of the lavish postwar *Kostümfilm* at UFA and had come to Hollywood in late 1922 with the scenarist Hanns Kräly (1885–1950) to direct Mary Pickford in *Rosita* (1923). Once there, he embarked on a series of stylish sex comedies that made him famous for his subtle visual wit.

Soon all of Hollywood spoke of the "Lubitsch touch"—the use of symbolic detail, such as a meaningful glance or gesture or the closing of a bedroom door to suggest sexual activity that could not have been depicted with impunity on the screen. In sum, Lubitsch brought a touch of Continental elegance and irony to Hollywood in the 1920s that was widely imitated by other directors. He went on to become an important innovator of the early sound film, and by 1935, he had become production chief of Paramount.

There were other Europeans in Hollywood during the 1920s, most of them Germans who had come to work for the American film industry as a result of the Parufamet Agreement of 1926. Between 1926 and 1927, Hollywood saw the arrival of the UFA directors F. W. Murnau, Paul Leni, Lothar Mendes, Ludwig Berger, Dmitri Buchowetski, Mihály Kertész, and Alexander Korda; the UFA cinematographer Karl Freund; the UFA performers Emil Jannings, Conrad Veidt, Werner Krauss, Pola Negri, Greta Garbo, and Lya De Putti; and the UFA producer Erich Pommer and the scenarist Carl Mayer. The Hungarian director Paul Fejos (born Pál Fejös, 1897–1963) made *The Last Moment* (1927) and the experimentally naturalistic *Lonesome* (1928) for Universal before returning to Europe in 1930; the Frenchman Jacques Feyder (1885–1948) directed some mediocre melodramas for MGM; and the Dane Benjamin Christensen (1879–1959), famous for his Swedish film *Häxan/Heksen* (1922; shown in a heavily edited English-language version as *Witchcraft through the Ages*), directed a fine series of melodramas for MGM and comedy-mysteries for First National. The great Swedish directors Victor Sjöström and Mauritz Stiller were both imported in the mid-1920s by MGM, where Sjöström—renamed Seastrom—produced three neglected masterpieces—*He Who Gets Slapped* (1924), *The Scarlet Letter* (1926), and *The Wind* (1928)—and Stiller was reduced to directing star vehicles, although his atmospheric *Hotel Imperial* (1927) remains a distinguished film. Sjöström returned to a life of semiretirement in Sweden in 1928, and Stiller died in the same year.

The fate of most foreign directors in Hollywood during the 1920s was similar to that of the Swedes. The American industry had imported them to lend Continental elegance and class to the standard studio product, but it had in fact refused to let them tamper with the nature of the product itself, and so, bitterly disillusioned, most went home. Of the directors, only Lubitsch and the Hungarian-born Mihály Kertész (Michael Curtiz) stayed on to adapt themselves to the Hollywood production system. Murnau stayed, too, but was killed in an auto accident in 1931, before he had achieved his promise.

Yet the European, and especially the Germanic, presence in Hollywood during the 1920s influenced the American cinema far more deeply than a purely descriptive account might suggest. The

Germans taught American filmmakers firsthand the Expressionistic use of lighting and camera that had helped produce their native cinema's greatest works. Some, such as Freund, made long, successful careers in Hollywood and soon, in the early years of sound, were joined by their distinguished countrymen Max Reinhardt, Fritz Lang, Max Ophüls, Detlef Sierck (Douglas Sirk), Curt and Robert Siodmak, William Dieterle, Billy Wilder, Edgar G. Ulmer, Eugen Schüfftan (Eugene Schuftan), Theodor Sparkuhl, Hans (John) Brahm, Otto Preminger, and Fred Zinnemann after the collapse of the Weimar Republic. All told, the Germanic influence on Hollywood camera style, lighting, and decor was a permanent, if understated, one, and it contributed substantially to the visual texture of American cinema in the sound era before the advent of widescreen.

In the American Grain

Despite the sophisticated cinema of the "new morality" and all of the European incursions just discussed, there was still a homegrown American tradition of sentimental melodrama and rural romance based on the uncomplicated narrative montage of Griffith's prewar films. Griffith had established this tradition in his Biograph shorts and continued it well into the 1920s. Other practitioners were Henry King (1888–1982), whose narrative montage in *Tol'able David* (1921) was much admired and analyzed by V. I. Pudovkin; King Vidor (1894–1982); William Wellman (1896–1975); Clarence Brown (1890–1987); Rowland V. Lee (1891–1975); Allan Dwan (1885–1981); and Frank Borzage (1893–1962).

Side by side with the Griffith tradition, which was extinguished by the coming of sound, two native genres—the Western and the action spectacle—grew up. The Western had been a major component of the American cinema since Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* in 1903, and Thomas Ince had become a master of the tough, realistic Western, as exemplified in the films of William S. Hart in the teens.

Yet it wasn't until the 1920s that the Western came into its own as a unique feature genre; as David Robinson suggests, this may well have been a function of collective public nostalgia for the lost frontier. When Porter made the first Western in 1903, the American West was still an authentic borderland between civilization and the wilderness. By the mid-1920s, America had become an urbanized, industrialized mass society predicated on mass consumption, mass communications, and rapid transportation, and the Edenic potential of the frontier had been permanently circumscribed by a mushrooming corporate economy. Thus, during the 1920s, the classical form of the Western genre was codified and given its first epic expression in films such as King Baggott's *Tumbleweeds* (1925), James Cruze's *The Covered Wagon* (1923) and *The Pony Express* (1925), and John Ford's *The Iron Horse* (1924).

The adventure spectacle was largely the province of a single performer, Douglas Fairbanks (1883–1939), whose star personality so influenced the character of his films that he deserves to be called an *auteur*. Fairbanks began his career at Griffith's Triangle Company, where he starred in comedies that debunked contemporary manners and parodied current film genres and fads. In these films, most of them written by Anita Loos, Fairbanks played an all-American boy—boisterous, optimistic, and athletic—who detested weakness, insincerity, and social regimentation in any form.

After Fairbanks became a superstar and helped form United Artists, he cast himself as the protagonist in a series of lavish costume-adventure spectacles, for instance, *The Mark of Zorro* (Fred Niblo, 1920) and *The Thief of Bagdad* (Raoul Walsh, 1924). In these extravagant seriocomic "swashbucklers," the very first of their kind, Fairbanks displayed the full gamut of his energetic athleticism to contemporary audiences, thrilling them with a nearly continuous succession of breathtaking stunts. Fairbanks's physical agility was his main virtue as a performer, and he was forced into retirement in 1934 under the twin pressures of sound and advancing age. Yet during his meteoric ascent to stardom, he had initiated a perennially popular genre and incarnated for millions of Americans Hollywood's obsession with physical culture and glamour.

A third genre, which might be called the "narrative documentary," was founded in the 1920s by the American explorer and amateur cameraman Robert Flaherty (1884–1951). Flaherty was originally a mineralogist in the Canadian Arctic who had surveyed the Belcher Islands in 1917 and became interested in the harsh lives of the Eskimos who populated them. In 1920, sponsored by the fur company Revillon Frères, Flaherty returned to the islands to live with an Eskimo family and make a film about the daily lives of its members. After sixteen months, he returned to the







United States with the footage and edited it into the seventy-five-minute feature documentary *Nanook of the North* (1922), which was distributed internationally by Pathé with great commercial and critical success.

One source of *Nanook*'s popularity was its exoticism: it represented the first sustained encounter between the civilized world and the Eskimo, outside of professional ethnographic circles. Yet *Nanook* was also unique in using the editing syntax of narrative film to portray a documentary reality. Flaherty had shot close-ups, **reverse angles**, tilts, and pans on location to be intercut later with the rest of his footage, and he had assumed a third-person point of view toward his subject throughout the film. He had also directed the Eskimos in enacting or reenacting certain scenes before the camera to accord with a loosely constructed story line that was true to the spirit, if not the letter, of their lives.

The American industry was so impressed with *Nanook*'s high audience appeal and low cost (about $55,000) that Jesse L. Lasky of Paramount commissioned Flaherty to make another such film anywhere in the world on a subject of his choice. The result was *Moana* (1926), an idyllic documentary of life on the South Seas island of Samoa, photographed over a period of twenty months. Its beauty was enhanced by the recently introduced Eastman **panchromatic stock**, which was sensitive to the entire visible spectrum, as opposed to the then standard **orthochromatic stock** (on which *Nanook* had been shot), which was relatively insensitive to yellows and reds.

Flaherty also used a high percentage of telephoto-lens shots in *Moana,* which became a hallmark of his later camera style. Once again, Flaherty had edited his film as a narrative and had reconstructed reality, instead of simply recording it. The film was attacked by anthropologists as poetic fantasy (which it was), rather than an accurate representation of Samoan life, and it was acclaimed by critics on precisely the same grounds.

Flaherty was next commissioned by MGM to collaborate with W. S. Van Dyke (1889–1943) on the

(top left) *The Iron Horse* (John Ford, 1924).

(middle left) Douglas Fairbanks in *The Thief of Bagdad* (Raoul Walsh, 1924), written and produced by Fairbanks for United Artists.

(bottom left) Nanook's wife Nyla and their son Cunayou in *Nanook of the North* (Robert Flaherty, 1922).



The spectacular chariot race in *Ben-Hur* (Fred Niblo, 1925).

production of *White Shadows in the South Seas* (1928), a dramatic feature based on a popular book by Flaherty's friend Frederick O'Brien, to be shot on location in Tahiti, but he quit the project in revulsion at its commercialism.

A subsequent collaboration with F. W. Murnau on the independently produced *Tabu* (1931), a narrative about the lives of Tahitian pearl divers, proved more successful, but Flaherty became disillusioned with Murnau's melodramatic approach to the material and withdrew from the film after supervising its photography. At this point in his career, thoroughly disgusted with the Hollywood studio system, Flaherty emigrated to England, where he exercised a decisive influence on John Grierson and the British social-documentary movement of the 1930s. Flaherty was far too personal and individual an artist to ever work again in Hollywood, but he did return to the United States in later life to make two more powerful films for nontheatrical release—*The Land* (1942), produced for the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the auspices of another documentarist, Pare Lorentz (1905–1992), and *Louisiana Story* (1948), produced for Standard Oil of New Jersey—both among the finest achievements in documentary narrative.

Despite the presence of so much individual talent in Hollywood in the 1920s, most American films were produced according to formula. Soaring production costs during that decade forced the studios toward a rigid standardization of product. Whereas Griffith had spent a little more than $100,000 to produce *The Birth of a Nation* in 1914, MGM spent more than $4.5 million to produce *Ben-Hur* (Fred Niblo, 1925) only ten years later. In fact, film historian Benjamin Hampton estimates that there was a 1,500 percent across-the-board increase in the cost of feature production during this period, which meant that the pressure to make films according to tried-and-true formulas was extreme. Experimenting with public taste (never very advanced) for the sake of art could result in a crippling capital loss, and it was during the 1920s that "Play It Safe" became the enduring First Commandment and Golden Rule of the American film industry. Yet there was a towering exception to this general law

in the work of a single man—the enigmatic, distasteful, and finally tragic figure of Erich von Stroheim (1885–1957).

Erich von Stroheim

Von Stroheim was born Erich Oswald Stroheim in Vienna, the son of a Jewish merchant from Silesia, and emigrated to the United States some time between 1906 and 1909. Little is known of his early life here, but he eventually came to Hollywood, where he affixed the "von" to his surname and propagated the myth that he was descended from the Austrian aristocracy and had been a cavalry officer in his youth.

As Erich von Stroheim, he first went to work as an extra and developed a great admiration for Griffith after a brief appearance in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). He subsequently became an assistant to Griffith on *Intolerance* (1916) and, between 1915 and 1917, to Triangle Company directors John Emerson (1878–1956), Allan Dwan (1885–1981), and George Fitzmaurice (1885–1940). In 1918, von Stroheim served as assistant director and military advisor on Griffith's World War I epic *Hearts of the World*, in which he also played his first feature role as a brutal Prussian officer—the kind of role that later made him famous to American audiences as "The Man You Love to Hate."

Von Stroheim was given his first chance to direct by Carl Laemmle of Universal Pictures, who permitted him to adapt his original screenplay, *The Pinnacle*, as *Blind Husbands* in 1919. The film concerns the seduction of a naïve American wife by a cynical Prussian officer (played by von Stroheim) at a resort in the Austrian Alps, and it was among the very first American postwar films to deal with sex in a sophisticated way. Despite its rather conventional plot, *Blind Husbands* is full of subtle psychological insights and visual wit, and it was a tremendous popular success.

Von Stroheim's next two films repeated the pattern of *Blind Husbands* with something like obsessiveness: each concerns a sexual triangle in which an American wife in Europe is seduced by an army officer, and each is rendered with unsparing documentary and psychological realism. Moreover, the three films among them brought together the production team with which von Stroheim was to work for most of his career—the cameramen Ben Reynolds and William Daniels, and the performers Gibson Gowland, Sam De Grasse, Mae Busch, and Maude George.

There are no surviving prints of *The Devil's Passkey*, which was made for Universal in 1919 and released in 1920, but it ran to the amazing length of twelve full reels (well over two hours) and forecast von Stroheim's desire to expand the narrative cinema to a form commensurate with that of the great realistic novels of the nineteenth century. Based on the evidence of contemporary reviews, it contained some spectacular tinting and toning effects, including a rhythmic montage sequence involving alternating colors. *The Devil's Passkey* was also the last film that the director was ever permitted to finish as he had planned.

To complete his trilogy of adultery (although, according to the formula of the day, the act of adultery itself was never shown to be consummated), von Stroheim made *Foolish Wives* (1922), which most critics consider to be his first great film. This sordid and satiric tale of a lecherous Russian "count" (von Stroheim), who makes his living on the Riviera by bilking rich American tourists, was initially conceived by Laemmle as the perfect von Stroheim vehicle, and shooting began in July 1920. To augment its realism, von Stroheim constructed an elaborate full-scale reproduction of the main square of Monte Carlo on the Universal back lot, with hotels, cafés, and casinos represented in minute detail. Furthermore, von Stroheim insisted that the exteriors for these sets be constructed at an isolated location on the Monterey Peninsula, 300 miles from the studio, where the California coast most resembles the Mediterranean.

Originally budgeted at $250,000, the costs of *Foolish Wives* began to soar toward $750,000, and the Universal publicity department seized on the opportunity to promote it as the most expensive motion picture ever made. Finally completed in June 1921 at $1,124,500, the film ran twenty-four reels (approximately three hundred and fifteen minutes, or five and one quarter hours), much of it hand-colored by Gustav Brock, and von Stroheim planned to release it in two parts, as Lang's *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* had been released that year in Europe. However, the Universal production manager Irving Thalberg (1899–1936) ordered it cut to fourteen reels (two hundred and ten minutes) by studio editor Arthur Ripley (1897–1961) for its New York premiere in January 1922 and changed many of its titles to read less candidly than its director intended, partly in response to the Hollywood scandals of late 1921.

Foolish Wives was cut still further for general release, to ten reels, but even in its mutilated version it remains a brilliant, brutal film, full of studied vignettes of postwar European decadence and rich psychological characterization. Thanks to Universal's publicity



Foolish Wives (Erich von Stroheim, 1922): the casino, the hotel, and the Café de Paris in Monte Carlo reconstructed to scale on the Universal back lot in San Fernando Valley.

campaign, *Foolish Wives* was a *succès de scandale*, but due to its huge budget, the film produced a loss of $255,200. Nevertheless, its reception had established von Stroheim as an industry giant, very nearly on a par with Griffith, and his next film for Universal was *Merry-Go-Round* (1923), the beginning of another erotic trilogy, set this time in prewar Austria during the decline of the Hapsburg Empire.

Midway through the shooting, in October, Thalberg removed the director from the film because of his lavish and expensive attention to detail and replaced him with Rupert Julian (1889–1943), terminating von Stroheim's association with Universal. Yet his celebrity as both an actor and a director was such that, within a month, he had negotiated a three-film contract with Goldwyn Pictures, the first of which was to be the realization of a long-cherished project: an adaptation of Frank Norris's naturalistic American novel *McTeague* (1899).

Norris's novel, like Émile Zola's *L'assommoir* (1877), was a model of the nineteenth-century **naturalist** convention by which some hereditary flaw or character trait brings its protagonists to ruin through a steady process of degeneration. The title character of *McTeague* is a young man with a family heritage of brutality who sets up as a dentist in San Francisco and eventually marries Trina Sieppe, the daughter of lower-middle-class German immigrants. Trina wins



From the conclusion of *Greed* (Erich von Stroheim, 1924).

$5,000 in a lottery and becomes a monster of avarice in her attempts to retain the entire sum without spending a penny. McTeague loses his job through trusting a rival, and the couple sinks lower and lower on the socioeconomic scale until they are reduced to a state of total degradation. McTeague begins to drink; finally, his hereditary brutishness asserts itself, and he murders Trina for her gold. The novel ends in Death Valley, where the fugitive McTeague encounters his rival, Marcus, and beats him to death with a pistol butt. Yet McTeague, too, is doomed, for in the process of his struggle with Marcus he has become handcuffed to the corpse. This grim tale was unlikely raw material for Hollywood commercial entertainment, but it was von Stroheim's intention to translate the novel, as a totality, into cinematic terms and to render its naturalism photographically meaningful.

The film was shot by Ben Reynolds and William Daniels entirely on location in the streets and rooming houses of San Francisco, in Death Valley, and in the northern California hills, on the basis of von Stroheim's own script. The process took nine months and cost more than half a million dollars—three times the amount originally budgeted but all of it approved in stages by Goldwyn executives.

After von Stroheim had personally edited the film in early 1924, he presented Goldwyn with a forty-two-reel work print running over nine hours. He was asked to reduce it to a reasonable length for commercial distribution in two parts. This twenty-two reel, five-hour version was completed in March but was still too long for Goldwyn, so von Stroheim shipped the film to his friend, the Metro director Rex Ingram (1892–1950), for further reduction. Collaborating with the editor Grant Whytock, who had worked with von Stroheim on *The Devil's Passkey*, Ingram broke the film into two halves, eliminating some of the subplots. This eighteen-reel print, which Ingram and von Stroheim considered the absolute minimum to which the film could be cut without destroying its continuity, ran approximately four hours and was intended for release in two parts.

In the meantime, however, Goldwyn Pictures had merged with Metro Pictures and Louis B. Mayer Productions to become MGM, and Mayer replaced Goldwyn as the executive in charge of production. Among Mayer's first acts as studio chief was to turn von Stroheim's epic over to his new assistant and the director's old adversary, Irving Thalberg, for further editing. The film was eventually cut to ten reels by an MGM title writer, Joseph Farnham, who had read neither the novel nor the shooting script, and the excised footage was destroyed. Retitled *Greed* (1924), this mutilated version of the film was the only one ever publicly seen, and it opened to modest critical acclaim, despite its incoherence, and actually made a profit of a quarter million dollars.

At one-fourth of its original length, *Greed* is a fragmentary masterpiece with vast gaps in continuity bridged by lengthy and often ludicrous titles, but it is a masterpiece nonetheless. Because von Stroheim was an original master of the long take and built up his most powerful effects *within* shots rather than editing between them, many of the film's greatest sequences have survived intact. Even as it stands, *Greed* is overwhelming in its psychological intensity, for von Stroheim used strikingly clear deep-focus photography and a documentary-like mise-en-scène to totally immerse us in the reality of the film. His camera moves very little, and in a manner forecasting the work of Michelangelo Antonioni, the narrative proceeds through a gradual accretion of detail in which the time and space of the characters in the film become our own. Palpably real photographic objects—a caged canary, a funeral cortège, a huge gold tooth, cuts of meat—acquire symbolic value through composition in depth, rather than expressive montage or the Griffithian intercut close-up. Von Stroheim, who had mortgaged his home and his car to support himself during the editing of *Greed* (he was paid only for direction), disowned the film and refused to see it after it was released.

Incredibly, he was hired back by MGM in 1925 and given a free hand in adapting the Franz Lehár operetta



Erich von Stroheim and Zazu Pitts in *The Wedding March* (Erich von Stroheim, 1928): the wedding.

The Merry Widow (1925), although he was forced to use the stars John Gilbert and Mae Murray against his will. By reducing the operetta to less than one-half of the film's running time and adding his own material, von Stroheim was able to turn this purely commercial venture into the second film in his darkly satiric trilogy on the corruption of the Viennese aristocracy. Although technically set in an imaginary Ruritanian kingdom named Monteblanco, *The Merry Widow* clearly reflects the decadence of the Hapsburg Empire at the turn of the century and reveals the rottenness and perversion concealed beneath its elegant façade. The studio deleted a few scenes from the release print due to their explicit sexual content, but *The Merry Widow* came closer to realizing its director's intentions than any film he had made since *The Devil's Passkey* in 1919. Stencil-colored by the Handschiegl process (color tinting), with a concluding two-minute Technicolor sequence shot by Ray Rennahan, it was an international success, both critically and commercially, and it made a fortune for MGM.

At this point in his career, von Stroheim left MGM for good, in a bitter dispute over financial and creative differences, to make a film of his choice for Pat Powers's independent Celebrity Pictures. The result was *The Wedding March* (1928), von Stroheim's last great film and the concluding section of his trilogy on the decadence of imperial Austria. It tells the bitterly sardonic tale of a forced marriage between an impoverished Viennese nobleman (von Stroheim) and the crippled daughter of a wealthy industrialist, and it is among the most visually extravagant films ever made. *The Wedding March* also would have finally realized von

Stroheim's perennial desire to make a long film in two parts, whose form would approximate that of the great nineteenth-century novels.

Shooting began in June 1926, and *Part I* was completed as von Stroheim had intended. Yet midway through the filming of *Part II*, in January 1927, he was removed from the project by Paramount, to whom Powers had been forced to sell his option when von Stroheim overran his original budget of $750,000 by $400,000. Paramount turned the footage over to Josef von Sternberg to edit into a single film. Between them, von Stroheim and von Sternberg were able to put together a version of *The Wedding March* that corresponded roughly to the original *Part I* and concluded with the wedding of the protagonists in St. Stephen's Cathedral (shot in Technicolor by Ray Rennahan). However, vice president for production Jesse Lasky rejected this version and had it recut by a studio editor, Julian Johnson, into what eventually became a twelve-reel release print.

The film was scheduled for a January 1928 premiere but was temporarily shelved due to the advent of sound, while studio executives decided to add a synchronized score. This version was finally released in October 1928 to dismal reviews and box-office failure. Paramount editors then combined footage from *Parts I* and *II* into a hodgepodge titled *The Honeymoon*, which was released in Europe in 1929, and subsequently disowned by von Stroheim. Just before his death in 1957, the director recut the first part of the film to conform more closely to his original intention, and there is now, preserved in the archives of the Cinémathèque Française, von Stroheim's own 16mm sound-on-film reconstruction of this most lavish and erotic masterpiece of mise-en-scène.

After the *Wedding March* debacle, as after *Greed*, von Stroheim's reputation among Hollywood producers was not good, but his singular talent was indisputable. In 1928, he was commissioned by Joseph Kennedy (then an independent producer) to write and direct a star vehicle for Gloria Swanson (1899–1983), who had quit Paramount in 1926 to produce her own films for release through United Artists. The two-part script, which was approved by the Hays Office and originally called *The Swamp*, can only be described as bizarre.

In the European episode, Prince Wolfram, betrothed to the queen of the small Bavarian state of Cobourg-Nassau, falls in love with a young convent girl named Kitty Kelly (Swanson) and later abducts her to his apartments in the royal palace. They are caught by his fiancée, Queen Regina, who whips Kelly from the palace with a riding crop and has Wolfram imprisoned. Meanwhile, after an abortive suicide attempt, Kelly finds she has been summoned to German East Africa, where her guardian aunt lies dying in Dar-es-Salaam. *Part II* begins when Kelly arrives in Africa to discover that her aunt is the owner of a rundown brothel. Penniless, the old woman has arranged for her niece to marry "the richest guy in Africa," an aged, degenerate planter named Jan, which in a delirium of disgust Kelly does. Eight months later, Kelly has transformed the seedy whorehouse into the classy "Poto-Poto" bordello and installed herself as its reigning queen. Subsequently, Jan dies of syphilis, and Prince Wolfram arrives by steamer from Germany, where Queen Regina has also died. He ultimately convinces Kelly to return with him to Cobourg-Nassau, where they are married and she is coronated "Queen Kelly," institutionalizing the regal spirit she has carried within her all along—but also suggesting the continuity of depravity between "civilized" Europe and "barbaric" Africa.

Working with cinematographers Gordon Pollock and Paul Ivano, von Stroheim had shot more than half of this fantastic film, including some harrowing African sequences, when he was removed from the project at Swanson's insistence in January 1929. Increasingly fearful of censorship of the African scenes and morally outraged at what she later called "Mr. von Stroheim's apocalyptic vision of hell on earth," Swanson authorized Kennedy to find another director to salvage the project, but this ultimately proved impossible, owing to the industry's wholesale conversion to "talkies" and other factors.

Finally, in November 1931, Swanson—who had invested about $800,000 in the production so far—tacked an abrupt conclusion onto the European episode, showing Kelly's suicide attempt (shot by Gregg Toland) to have been successful, and released the film in Europe the following year as "an original von Stroheim," where it was widely hailed but little seen. Like the mutilated *Greed* and *The Honeymoon*, this remnant was disowned by von Stroheim, but a recent reconstruction has restored *Queen Kelly* as the director originally shot it, although it remains, of course, incomplete.

The cancellation of *Queen Kelly* was a professional disaster for von Stroheim. It seemed to confirm his vastly inflated reputation for excess and perversity in the eyes of all Hollywood, and the conversion to sound became a pretext on the part of his many enemies for squeezing him out of the industry. He was reduced to writing screenplays and acting in other people's films to make a living.



Seena Owen and Gloria Swanson in *Queen Kelly* (Erich von Stroheim, 1929).

Yet after an abortive attempt to remake *Blind Husbands* for Universal in sound and (two-color) Technicolor between 1930 and 1931, von Stroheim was given his last chance to direct by Winfield Sheehan, an executive for the Fox Film Corporation, who signed him to adapt an unproduced Dawn Powell play, *Walking Down Broadway*, in late 1931. Although this story of two small-town girls rooming together in contemporary New York City was conceived as a modest program picture by Fox, von Stroheim lavished infinite care on its visual texture, working in close collaboration with the cinematographer James Wong Howe (1899–1976).

After several delays, shooting started on September 2, 1932, and *Walking Down Broadway* was completed in an exemplary manner forty-eight days later for the budgeted amount of $300,000, but in the process it seems to have become a study of morbid psychology with lesbian undertones. When Fox vice president Sol Wurtzel saw the film, he was outraged and halted its release. Von Stroheim was fired, the script rewritten, and the film turned over to several directors, including Alan Crosland, Raoul Walsh, Sidney Lanfield, Edwin Burke, and Alfred Werker, to be reshot. The revised version, containing about one-half of the original, was released in March 1933 as *Hello, Sister!* without von Stroheim's name appearing on the credits.

After he had been fired successively by Universal, MGM, Paramount, United Artists, and Fox, von Stroheim's reputation as a filmmaker was completely destroyed, and he was never permitted to direct again. He worked for a while as a dialogue writer at MGM, much as Keaton was forced to do, before turning completely to acting. Between 1934 and 1955, von Stroheim appeared in some fifty-two films for other directors and gave many distinguished performances—for instance, in Jean Renoir's *La grande illusion* (1937) and



Erich von Stroheim directs.

Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950). He made a fair living at this profession, wrote several novels, and was still a celebrity when he died in France in 1957.

Simultaneously a romanticist, a determinist, and a cynic, Erich von Stroheim was Hollywood's last great independent director and its last great personal *auteur*. For most of his films, he was his own scenarist, art director, costume designer, editor, assistant cameraman, and star. His obsessive realism became a Hollywood legend, and yet, realism for von Stroheim was always a means toward the end of symbolic naturalism—a mode practiced by late-nineteenth-century novelists such as Zola, Maupassant, Crane, and Norris, in which the accumulation of surface detail ultimately leads us beneath the surface of things to some deeper human meaning. To this end as well, von Stroheim rejected Griffithian montage in favor of the long take, or sequence shot, composed in depth from a relatively static camera—shots that have the naturalistic effect of linking characters with their environment.

Yet if von Stroheim was a naturalist, he was also, often simultaneously, an ironic fantasist. His fascination with sexual perversion is a case in point. He did not use it to titillate, as DeMille might have done, or even to display his worldliness, as might have been expected of Lubitsch. Like Luis Buñuel after him, von Stroheim used sexual pathology as a metaphor for a more pervasive cultural decadence that was his main philosophical concern. The corruption of the European aristocracy, the corruptibility of the American bourgeoisie, and the degradation of the masses are the recurrent themes of von Stroheim's major work. They bespeak a profound cultural pessimism born of late-nineteenth-century Europe—the bitter dregs of a failed idealism—which is balanced in the films themselves by an obvious

sympathy for the individual humans caught up in the self-destructive impulses of the race.

"Self-destructive" is a term that many people have applied to von Stroheim, and it is true that he was in some sense a victim of his own temperament and his own myth. Yet he was also a casualty of Hollywood's transformation from a speculative entrepreneurial enterprise into a vertically and horizontally integrated big business, and his beleaguered career as a director from 1918 to 1932 is a virtual paradigm of that transformation. What happened to von Stroheim in Hollywood during the 1920s was the same thing that happened to Griffith, Chaplin, and Keaton, those three other great independent producer-directors of the American silent film.

When von Stroheim and Griffith first began to make feature films in Southern California in the teens, there was no established procedure for producing them because they were an unprecedented commodity. As things evolved at the time, some individual or group of individuals with investment capital—a Harry Aitken or a Carl Laemmle, for example—would provide the financial backing, and Griffith and von Stroheim would "produce" their own films in the most literal sense of the term. Script writing, casting, locations, set design, art direction, and the general logistics of shooting the film, in addition to the shooting and editing itself, were all directorial responsibilities, and this ensured a high degree of personal artistic freedom for the individual director.

As American film production grew into what its promoters claimed to be the nation's fourth-largest industry between 1919 and 1927, this system of independent production yielded first to the privately owned studio (Triangle Films, Keaton Productions, Chaplin Productions) and finally to the monopolistic industrial combines of Paramount, Fox, Associated–First National, and MGM. By 1927, the studio filmmaking process had been standardized under the supervisory production system pioneered by Thomas Ince and Mack Sennett a decade earlier, and there was little place within the system for such an individual and eccentric talent as a von Stroheim or a Keaton or a Griffith.

The coming of sound would clinch the matter. The studios had to borrow huge sums of money to pay for the conversion on the very eve of the Great Depression, which spurred them to increase the efficiency of their production process by totally effacing the concept of the personal director and replacing it with the concept of the executive producer, modeled on MGM's Irving Thalberg, the man who had done such injury to *Foolish Wives* and *Greed*.

Thus, the coming of sound meant a great deal more for American cinema than the transformation of those dreamlike, hallucinatory demigods of the silent screen into mere mortals with accents, drawls, and lisps—more even than the regressive inertia temporarily caused by the early technology of recording sound. It meant the transformation of a wildcat business run largely by filmmakers fascinated with the process of film itself into a large-scale technological industry controlled by corporate managers who exercised supreme authority over all artistic variables in order to maximize profits.

Like so many other aspects of modern American life—including mass communications, mass consumption, and rapid transit—gigantic corporate capitalism was born of the 1920s. That decade was the only time in the history of American film that so much talent has ever been allowed to display itself so extravagantly and magnificently, and then been so ruthlessly destroyed.



Basil Rathbone and Errol Flynn in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (Michael Curtiz and William Keighley, 1938) in Technicolor.



07

The Coming of Sound and Color, 1926–1935

Sound-on-Disc

After the invention of the cinema itself, the most important event in film history was the introduction of sound. In fact, the idea of combining motion pictures with some type of synchronized sound had been present since their inception. Thomas Edison originally commissioned the invention of the Kinetograph with the notion of providing a visual accompaniment for his phonograph, and W. K. L. Dickson had actually achieved a rough synchronization of the two machines as early as 1889.

Many other inventors, such as Georges Demeny and Auguste Baron in France and William Friese-Greene in England, experimented with devices for coupling sound and image before the turn of the century. At the Paris World Exposition of 1900, three separate systems that synchronized phonograph recordings with projected film strips were exhibited: the Phonorama of L. A. Berthon, C. F. Dussaud, and G. F. Jaubert; Léon Gaumont's Chronophone; and the Phono-Cinéma Théâtre of Clément-Maurice Gratioulet and Henri Lioret, which offered minute-long performances by great stars of the theater, the opera, and the ballet. In Germany, Oskar Messter began to produce short synchronized sound films as novelty items in 1903, and by 1908, he was supplying exhibitors with recorded musical scores for nearly all of



Piano accompaniment for *Sherlock Jr.* (Buster Keaton, 1924).

his productions. In Britain, Gaumont's Chronophone proved popular, as did Cecil Hepworth's Vivaphone; and in the United States, the Edison Corporation achieved modest technical success with two phonofilm systems—Cinephonograph and **Kinetophone**.

All of these early systems relied on the phonograph to reproduce the sound component of the filmed performance. The earlier ones used wax cylinders and the later ones discs, but all had three difficulties in common: synchronizing the sound recording with the filmed event, amplifying the sound for presentation to a large audience, and reconciling the brevity of the cylinder and disc formats with the standard length of motion pictures.

The first problem was partly solved by using a number of regulatory devices intended to ensure an exact correspondence of sound and image, but these were usually imperfect in operation. If the phonograph stylus skipped a groove in performance, for example, or if the film strip broke in the projector, regaining synchronization was nearly impossible. The problem of amplification was generally dealt with by concealing a battery of single-horn speakers behind the screen, although experiments with compressed-air speakers of the sort used today began around 1910.

The third problem was the most difficult to solve. By 1905, the length of the standard narrative film had far exceeded the four-minute playing time of the phonograph cylinder and the five-minute time of the 12-inch disc. The introduction of automatic changers and multiple phonographs did not resolve the difficulty, because changing records frequently caused a loss of synchronization, and the use of oversized discs only resulted in poor sound quality. In the years before World War I, as the standard length of films grew even longer and their interframe structure more complex, experimental interest in the imperfect phonofilm sound systems died out. They remained extant through the war mainly as a means of making short novelty films in single takes.

Yet the imperfection of the phonofilm systems did not leave the motion pictures soundless. In fact, the "silent" cinema was rarely that. Sound effects provided by individual performers or by sound-effect machines such as the Allefex and the Kinematophone were a standard feature of films after 1908, and live music had been a part of the cinema since its beginnings. A pianist had accompanied the first commercial motion-picture exhibition, the Lumière Cinématographe program at the Grand Café, Paris, December 28, 1895, and Méliès personally provided piano accompaniment for the Paris debut of *Le voyage dans la lune* in 1902. Pianists were employed in most storefront theaters and nickelodeons in the first decade of the twentieth century to improvise music to fit the scenes. As the standard film length increased from one reel (about 1,000 feet, or 16 minutes at the average silent speed of 16 fps) to six to ten reels (90 to 160 minutes) between 1905 and 1914, film narratives grew increasingly sophisticated, and the practice of musicians playing intermittently during film programs gave way to continuous musical accompaniment, in which the nature of each scene determined the kind of music played with it.

During this period, the nickelodeons and the storefronts began to be replaced by "dream palaces" that could seat thousands of moviegoers and accommodate hundred-piece orchestras or, at the very least, a mighty Wurlitzer organ that could produce a wide range of orchestral effects. By the time the feature film had become the dominant cinematic form in the West, many producers were commissioning original scores for their class-A productions, and during the 1920s, all features, regardless of quality, were accompanied by cue sheets suggesting appropriate musical selections to be played at designated points in the film.

The first original piece of film music was composed in 1907 by Camille Saint-Saëns for the Société Film d'Art's *L'assassinat du duc de Guise* (1908). Other memorable and distinguished scores of the "silent" era were Joseph Carl Breil's scores for Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916), Hugo Riesenfeld's score for F. W. Murnau's *Sunrise* (1927), Louis F. Gottschalk's score for Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* (1919), Erno Rapee's score for John Ford's *The Iron Horse* (1924), and Leo Kempinski's score for Erich von Stroheim's *Greed* (1924). In Europe, Edmund Meisel wrote brilliant revolutionary scores for Eisenstein's *Potemkin* (1925) and *October* (1928), and Gottfried Huppertz composed for Fritz Lang's *Die Nibelungen: Siegfried* (1924) and *Metropolis* (1926). Other European composers who scored films during the 1920s include Erik Satie, Jean Sibelius, Paul Hindemith, and Dmitri Shostakovich.

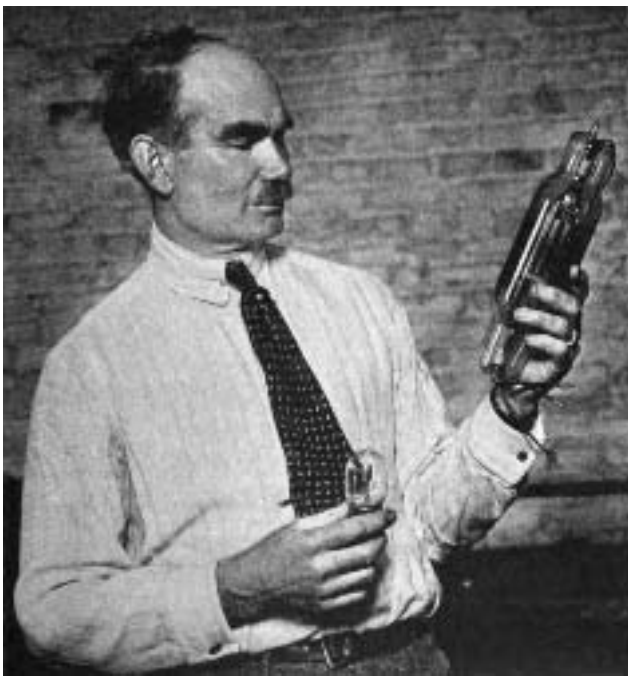
Sound-on-Film

The notion that sound could complement and vivify the experience of cinema, then, came of age with the cinema itself. Yet because only a handful of exhibitors in major cities could afford full-scale orchestras or even Wurlitzer organs, the search for an inexpensive and effective means of recording sound for films continued during and after the war, when experimental emphasis shifted from sound-on-disc to sound-on-film systems. It was reasoned at this point that the massive problems of synchronization encountered in the disc systems could be solved by recording the sound on the same strip of film as the images.

The potential for recording sound photographically, or optically, by converting sound waves into patterns of light and shade, had been understood a decade before the invention of the Kinetograph, but the first successful attempt to record sound directly on a film strip, side by side with the image track, was made by Eugène Augustin Lauste, a former mechanical assistant to W. K. L. Dickson, in 1910, on the basis of a 1907 British patent for converting sound-modulated light beams into electrical impulses by means of a photoconductive selenium cell. Though he could find no significant financial backing for his system, which he called Photocinematophone, Lauste's experiments were to become the basis for the RCA Photophone, one of the two main sound-on-film systems adopted by Hollywood in the early sound era. However, the first workable sound-on-film, or optical sound, systems were not perfected until after the war.

In 1919, three German inventors—Josef Engl, Joseph Massole, and Hans Vogt—patented the Tri-Ergon (literally, "the work of three") process, a sound-on-film system that used a photoelectric cell to convert sound waves into electric impulses and electric impulses into light waves that were then recorded photographically on the edge of the film strip. Built onto their projector was a "reader," composed of an incandescent light and another photoelectric cell, which retranslated the patterns of light and shade back into sound waves as the film strip passed through the projector, ensuring perfect synchronization of sound and image. The Tri-Ergon process also incorporated a flywheel mechanism on a sprocket that prevented variations in film speed as the strip passed through the projector—a device necessary to maintain the continuous reproduction of sound without distortion. This flywheel was heavily protected by international patents, so that between 1920 and 1927, all other manufacturers of optical sound equipment had to either pay royalties to Tri-Ergon, infringe the patent, or market an inferior product. Tri-Ergon, whose technology was later employed throughout Germany, eventually sold its American rights to William Fox of Fox Film Corporation in 1927 and its Continental rights to UFA, which in 1928 sold them to Tonbild Syndikat AG, which was merged as Tobis-Klangfilm in 1929.

In 1923, an American inventor who had been active in the development of radio broadcasting, Dr. Lee de Forest (1873–1961), patented (independently of the German



Lee de Forest with audion tubes in 1922.

inventors) a sound-on-film system, very similar to the Tri-Ergon process, that also decisively solved the problem of amplification. In 1907, to improve radio reception, de Forest had patented the Audion 3-Electrode Amplifier Tube, or triode, a vacuum tube that amplified the sound it received electronically and drove it into a speaker.

The **audion** tube became essential to the technology of all sound systems requiring amplification—radio, public address, sound film, and ultimately, high-fidelity recording and television—because it is to sound reproduction what the lens is to projection; that is, it enables its message or signal to reach large numbers of people simultaneously. De Forest became preoccupied with the development of "talking pictures" in 1919, when he realized that incorporating his audion tube into an optical sound-on-film process would provide more amplification than was possible with any other system of the period. By 1922, de Forest had worked enough of the bugs out of his system to test it commercially, and in November of that year he founded the De Forest Phonofilm Company to produce a series of short sound films in cooperation with Dr. Hugo Riesenfeld, a composer of silent-film scores.

Working at the Norma Talmadge Studios in New York City, de Forest made several one- and two-reel phonofilms each week, and their success was such that by the middle of 1924, some thirty-four theaters in the East had been wired to show them and another fifty were in the process of being wired elsewhere in the United States, in Britain, and in Canada.

The content of de Forest's films was varied, but they all somehow exploited sound. They included set pieces from grand opera; instrumental performances by famous musicians; popular vaudeville acts; scenes from current plays; speeches by prominent people, such as President Calvin Coolidge, Senator Robert La Follette, and George Bernard Shaw; and even an original narrative from time to time.

Although de Forest experienced some popular success with the more than one thousand short sound films he made in New York between 1923 and 1927, his attempts to interest Hollywood producers in the phonofilm process proved fruitless, because they did not want to spend the money required to convert their entire system of production and exhibition. The studio chiefs tended to regard "talking pictures" as an expensive novelty that had no future beyond causing financial ruin for its backers, and not a single Hollywood executive showed the slightest interest in phonofilm until the phenomenal success of a rival sound-on-disc system called Vitaphone forced them to reassess their options in 1926.

Vitaphone

Vitaphone was a sophisticated sound-on-disc system employing multiple 33⅓ rpm discs developed at great expense by Western Electric and Bell Telephone Laboratories, a subsidiary firm of American Telephone and Telegraph Corporation (AT&T). When representatives of Western Electric attempted to market the system to the major studios in 1925, they were politely refused.

Yet the financially venturesome and, at the time, emphatically minor Warner Bros. Pictures decided to take a chance on sound. Warner Bros. was not on the verge of bankruptcy, as is frequently claimed. In fact, it had embarked on an aggressively expansionist campaign against its larger competitors and was having temporary cash-flow problems. The studio's executives conceived the acquisition of sound as an offensive, rather than a defensive, maneuver. So in April 1926, Warner Bros., with the financial assistance of the Wall Street banking group Goldman Sachs, established the Vitaphone Corporation, formally leasing the sound system from Western Electric, and for $800,000 secured the exclusive right to sublease it to other studios.

There was at first no question of making "talking pictures." Warner Bros.' notion was that Vitaphone could be used to provide synchronized musical accompaniment for all Warner Bros. films, enhancing their appeal to the second- and third-run theaters that had no orchestras. An official statement prepared for Vitaphone underscored the Warners' appeal to smaller exhibitors: "The invention will make it possible for every performance in a motion picture theater to have a full orchestral accompaniment to the picture regardless of the size of the house."

Having cast its lot with Vitaphone, Warner Bros. decided to promote it on a spectacular scale at a total cost of more than $3 million. For its world premiere on August 6, 1926, Warner Bros. presented *Don Juan* (Alan Crosland, 1926), the latest and most lavish John Barrymore costume drama, with an elaborate recorded orchestral score performed by the New York Philharmonic. The feature was preceded by a one-hour, $1 million program of sound shorts, featuring the stars of the Metropolitan Opera preceded by a brief filmed speech by Will Hays, president of the MPPDA, announcing "the beginning of a new era in music and motion pictures."

Again, Vitaphone was initially promoted as a revolutionary way of providing synchronized musical



Jane Winton and John Barrymore in *Don Juan* (Alan Crosland, 1926).

accompaniment for "silent" film, and its debut as such was enormously successful. The first Vitaphone program ran eight weeks in New York, where it was seen by more than a half-million people, who paid nearly $800,000. It went on to have record-breaking runs in Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, Detroit, St. Louis, and many European cities. The critics were unanimous in their praise of the Vitaphone system, describing it as "uncanny in its excellence," "impossible to imagine," and "the eighth wonder of the world." Of Hays's filmed speech before the program, professor of physics at Columbia University Michael Pupin remarked, "No closer approach to resurrection has ever been made by science."

Nevertheless, the future of Vitaphone was still uncertain in late 1926. No one could determine at this point whether its warm public and critical reception was the result of a passing fancy or a legitimate interest in sound films. The rest of the film industry had a very good reason for hoping that the enthusiasm for Vitaphone would pass. It was understood among studio chiefs that a full-scale conversion to sound would cost an incalculable amount of money and perhaps even bring the industry to financial collapse. New sound studios would have to be built and costly recording equipment installed. Thousands of cinema theaters across the country, many of them now owned by the studios, would have to be wired for sound and perhaps wired twice due to the

incompatibility of competing systems. (In 1927, the installation of Vitaphone equipment alone could cost as much as $25,000 per theater.) Each studio would suddenly have a huge backlog of silent films, representing millions of dollars in capital investment, and the industry's vast overseas market would be decimated if easily translated intertitles gave way to spoken dialogue.

The star system, which sustained the American studios and helped to sell their product all over the world, would also be thrown into disarray when actors and actresses trained solely in the art of mime suddenly had to start speaking dialogue. Finally, as *Variety*, the industry trade paper, asked, "What would happen to the class theatres with expensive orchestras and stage shows, if any jerk-water movie joint was able to give its patrons gorgeous feasts of music via the screen?"

In short, conversion to sound threatened the entire economic structure of the American (and, therefore, the Western) film industry, and the industry had every reason to resist it. By the beginning of 1927, though, Vitaphone's popular success could not be ignored, and in February of that year, executives of the Big Three (Loew's [MGM]; Famous Players–Lasky, soon to become Paramount; and First National) and the largest of the Little Five (Universal and Producers Distributing Corporation [PDC]) signed an accord to adopt a uniform sound system, if and when conversion became necessary. It was this agreement that ultimately led to the promotion of rival systems and the eventual triumph of sound-on-film over sound-on-disc.

For the time being, however, Vitaphone was still the best system on the market, and buoyed by the success of the *Don Juan* program, Warners announced that all of its silent films for 1927 would be produced with synchronized musical accompaniment. It also announced plans to buy one major theater in every large American city and wire it for sound. By April 1927, the Vitaphone Corporation had completed 150 installations, an average of 12 per week. In the same month, Warners completed construction of the first sound studio in the world, where, a month later, production began on the picture that would ensure



Al Jolson in *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927).

the triumph of the sound film and determine its future direction: Alan Crosland's *The Jazz Singer* (1927). Although Warners had been recording synchronized scores for its pictures and providing with them programs of sound shorts since August 1926, *The Jazz Singer* was to be the start of the studio's regular production of Vitaphone features for distribution to Vitaphone theaters. It was planned as a prestigious production, and the popular vaudeville star Al Jolson (1886–1950) was hired for $20,000 to play the lead.

The Jazz Singer, adapted from a successful Broadway play, told the sentimental story of the son of a Jewish cantor who undergoes an anguished conflict between his religion, his family, and his career as a music-hall singer. Like previous Vitaphone productions, it was conceived as a silent picture with a synchronized orchestral score, some Jewish cantorial music, and seven popular songs performed by Jolson. It was conceived, that is, as a "singing" rather than a "talking" picture, and all dialogue was to be provided by interpolated titles (intertitles).

Yet during the shooting of two musical sequences, Jolson ad-libbed some dialogue on the set, which Warners shrewdly permitted to remain in the finished film. At one point near the beginning of the picture, Jolson speaks to his audience in the middle of a nightclub act and delivers his famous "Wait a minute. . . . Wait a minute. . . . You ain't heard nothin' yet!" Later in the film, as he sits at a piano in his mother's parlor, he has a sentimental exchange with her that lasts several minutes, between verses of "Blue Skies." This was the only spoken dialogue in the film, yet its impact was sensational. Audiences had heard synchronized speech before, but only on formally contrived and easily anticipated occasions, such as the speech that preceded *Don Juan*. Suddenly, though, here was Jolson not only singing and dancing but speaking informally and spontaneously to other people in the film as someone might do in reality. The effect was not so much of *hearing* Jolson speak as of *overhearing* him speak, and it thrilled audiences, who were bored with the conventions of silent cinema and increasingly indifferent to the canned performances of the Vitaphone shorts. Thus, we say that the "talkies" were born with *The Jazz Singer*, not because it was the first feature-length film to employ synchronized dialogue, but because it was the first to employ sound in a realistic and seemingly spontaneous way.

The combination of Jolson, Vitaphone, and synchronized dialogue made *The Jazz Singer* an international success from the date of its premiere on October 6, 1927, eventually earning more than $3.5 million. By the end of 1927, it was playing to huge crowds in cities all over the world, and Warner Bros. was already starting to recoup its massive investment in the Vitaphone system. Most important, the film's success had convinced other Hollywood studios that sound was here to stay in the form of "talking" pictures, and they began a series of maneuvers to acquire sound-recording equipment of their own.

Fox Movietone

Another organization that hastened the conversion to sound was the Fox Film Corporation, like Warner Bros. a minor studio at the time. In 1927, its president, William Fox, secretly acquired the American rights to the Tri-Ergon sound-on-film process, including the flywheel mechanism, for $50,000. A year earlier, Fox had formed the Fox-Case Corporation to make short sound films with the system and exhibit them in his theaters under the name of Fox Movietone. Fox-Case experimented with Movietone for nearly a year before presenting its first program in New York City on January 21, 1927 (some six months after the premiere of Vitaphone), a short series of canned performances by a Spanish cabaret singer, followed by the silent feature *What Price Glory?* (Raoul Walsh, 1926). Several **newsreels** followed (of marching West Point cadets [April 30], and of Charles A. Lindbergh's fabled takeoff for Paris [May 20]), as well as an ambitious program on May 25, 1927, of three short performance films, followed by the feature film *Seventh Heaven* (Frank Borzage, 1927), with a synchronized orchestral score by Erno Rapee.

Yet it was the fifth Movietone program, offered on June 14, 1927, some four months before the opening of *The Jazz Singer,* that received international acclaim and convinced Fox of the value of the "talkies." On a bill with a conventional silent feature, Fox presented Movietone shorts of Lindbergh's reception at the White House by President Coolidge and of a speech by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. These shorts of famous personalities speaking directly and clearly from the screen electrified the audience, and popular reaction to them was so favorable that Fox and his newsreel producer Courtland Smith established the Fox Movietone News that autumn in response to it. This was the first regular sound newsreel series, and its success was phenomenal. Within the year, Fox Movietone was sending camera crews around the world to interview everyone from George Bernard

Shaw to the pope, and delivering three to four newsreels to Fox theaters per week.

When he inaugurated the Movietone News, Fox was certain that sound was on its way in, so he negotiated a reciprocal contract between Fox-Case and Vitaphone, in which each corporation licensed the other to use its sound systems, studios, technicians, and theaters. This had the effect of covering both Fox and Warners if one sound system won out over the other, and of combining their resources to ensure survival in the face of any rival system that might be promoted by their competitors. As it turned out, though, most of the competition came over to their side.

Financially, 1927 had been a very bad year for every Hollywood studio but Warners, and 1928 was already looking worse. Movie audiences had been dwindling since 1926, when the ready availability of the automobile and the radio to the average American family since the early 1920s had created considerable competition for the silent cinema, much as television would challenge the sound film in the late 1940s and the 1950s. In 1927, only sound films had been able to regularly attract large audiences, and by the spring of the next year, the worst sound film would outdraw the best silent picture in any given community in the country.

The Process of Conversion

By 1928, then, the American public had clearly chosen sound, and the studios could only acquiesce or be damned. The studios were at this point able to choose among several competing optical systems. While still marketing Vitaphone, Western Electric had developed a sophisticated sound-on-film process that was ready for diffusion through its nontelephone subsidiary, Electrical Research Products Incorporated (ERPI); Fox stood ready to market Movietone; and Radio Corporation of America (RCA) was offering a newly perfected General Electric system called Photophone.

RCA general manager David Sarnoff came very close to winning over Paramount and Loew's, but in the end ERPI's John Otterson was able to offer the studios a better deal, and on May 11, 1928, Paramount, Loew's, First National, and United Artists all signed licensing agreements with Western Electric; Universal, Columbia, Tiffany-Stahl, Hal Roach Comedies, and Christie Comedies soon followed. Sarnoff's reaction was to create his own vertically integrated major to exploit the Photophone process, acquiring Joseph P. Kennedy's production-distribution syndicate Film Booking Office (FBO), Pathé (which had just taken over PDC), and the Keith-Albee-Orpheum chain of two hundred downtown vaudeville theaters. This combine was merged as Radio-Keith-Orpheum (RKO), and by the summer of 1928, every studio in Hollywood, willingly or not, had somehow prepared for the conversion to sound.

Warner Bros., however, continued to lead the way. Having produced the first "part-talkie"—*The Jazz Singer*—it went on to produce the first "100 percent all-talkie": *Lights of New York* (Bryan Foy, 1928), a clumsily plotted tale of two small-town barbers who come to the city to seek their fortunes and become dangerously involved with a gang of bootleggers. *Lights of New York* ran only fifty seven minutes and was awkwardly directed, but twenty-two of its twenty-four sequences contained recorded dialogue, making it the first film in history to rely entirely on the spoken word to sustain its narrative. The enormous popular success of *Lights of New York* demonstrated to Hollywood that all-dialogue films not only could be made, but could draw huge audiences as well. In fact, the talkies were drawing so well by the end of 1928 that Hollywood became aware that the public would no longer pay to see silent films.

The upshot was a nearly total conversion to sound by the end of 1929 that radically changed the structure of the film industry and revolutionized the practice of cinema all over the world. In that year, fully three-fourths of all films made in Hollywood were released with some kind of prerecorded sound. *Film Daily Yearbook* for 1929 lists the production of 335 all-dialogue features, 95 features with a mixture of dialogue and subtitles, and 75 features with musical scores and sound effects. The films in the last two categories were silent pictures to which some sound had hastily been added to satisfy public demand, a common way of salvaging expensively produced silent features during the year of transition.

Hollywood also released 175 straight silent features in 1929 for exhibition in provincial theaters that had not yet been wired for sound (an operation costing between $8,500 and $20,000, depending on the seating capacity and the sound process), but by the end of the year, almost every American theater of any size had installed sound equipment. In fact, the number of theaters wired for sound increased more than fifty times between December 31, 1927, and December 31, 1929. As Alexander Walker writes, "There has never been such a lightning retooling of an entire industry—even wartime emergencies were slower."



The first all-dialogue film, Warner Bros.' *Lights of New York* (Bryan Foy, 1928), was enormously popular, returning its producers' $75,000 investment more than fourteen times.

Yet the transition was orderly and well planned, with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences functioning as a clearinghouse for information and a general industry resource. Starting in May 1928, it organized intensive educational seminars for studio personnel and set up special committees to help the studios solve technical problems and handle contractual disputes with equipment manufacturers.

The cost of the conversion, however, was staggering, requiring that the studios borrow huge sums of money from Wall Street. In July 1929, Fox's general manager, Winfield Sheehan, estimated that Hollywood had invested more than $50 million in the changeover. The final figure would be in excess of $300 million—nearly four times the market valuation of the entire industry for fiscal year 1928. Much of this capital was lent to the studios by the two corporate giants of the era, the Morgan and the Rockefeller groups, which also controlled Western Electric and RCA, thus strengthening the alliance between Hollywood and Wall Street that had begun in the early 1920s and that exists ever more visibly today.

Nevertheless, the prodigious borrowing of 1928–1929 was offset by the prodigious profits of the same year. Weekly attendance shot up from 60 million in 1927 to 90 million in 1930, with an increase in box-office receipts of 50 percent. After a deficit of more than $1 million in 1927, owing to its heavy investment in Vitaphone, Warner Bros. reported profits of more than $2 million in 1928 and more than $17 million in 1929, enabling the production company to gain control of 500 exhibition outlets by buying the Stanley theater chain and First National to become one of the most powerful studios in Hollywood for more than a decade.

By 1929, Fox's profits had soared high enough for the company to build itself a new $10-million all-sound studio and for Fox himself to pay $50 million for a controlling interest in Loew's Inc., which owned MGM, and another $20 million for a 45 percent share of Gaumont-British, England's largest producer/distributor/exhibitor.

In the same year, Paramount, with its international distribution network and vast Publix theater chain, acquired one-half of the newly formed Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and proposed a merger with Warner Bros. If things had continued on course, "Paramount-Vitaphone" and "Fox-Loew's" would have divided the entertainment industries of the English-speaking world between them, but the Justice Department of the Hoover administration intervened to prevent these combinations. Most of the other studios' profits doubled between 1928 and 1930, due to the public's mania for the talkies, and it is probably true that the introduction of sound, more than any other factor, enabled Hollywood to survive the Great Depression, which began with the stock market crash of October 1929.

When the Depression finally did hit Hollywood in 1932, the silent cinema was a distant memory. All sound equipment had been standardized by international agreement in 1930. Sound-on-film—Fox Movietone and RCA Photophone in the United States, Tobis-Klangfilm's Tri-Ergon process on the Continent—had won out over sound-on-disc because of the superior quality of reproduction in the former and the manifold problems of synchronization posed by the latter. Sound-on-film had also proved the most flexible system for recording on location, as the naturalistic sound track of Fox's *In Old Arizona* (Irving Cummings and Raoul Walsh, 1928), the first all-talkie shot outdoors, had demonstrated.

The immense profits Warners had reaped from Vitaphone enabled it to switch systems in its studios and theaters without risk. And in 1935, after nine years of litigation, Dr. Lee de Forest, who had spent $200,000 of his own funds developing the sound-on-film system that Hollywood eventually adopted but who had lacked the resources to promote it, was finally awarded the sum of $100,000 for patent infringement by the Fox-Case and Vitaphone Corporations.



Warner Baxter (Cisco Kid) sings "My Tonia" to Dorothy Burgess in *In Old Arizona* (Irving Cummings and Raoul Walsh, 1928); it was the first all-talkie shot outdoors.

The Introduction of Color

The so-called natural or photographic color processes became institutionalized at approximately the same time as sound, although, like sound, color had been a component of the film experience for a long time. Hand-tinting had been widely practiced during the novelty period when films were short enough to make it commercially viable. Méliès, in fact, employed twenty-one women at Montreuil to hand-tint his most spectacular films frame by frame; and Edison regularly tinted portions of his films, for example, the bursts of gunsmoke in Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* (1903).

In 1905, as the length of films and the number of prints required by exhibitors increased, Charles Pathé invented the Pathécolor stencil process to mechanize the application of color. Frame-by-frame stencils were cut by pantograph to correspond to the areas to be tinted in any one of six standard colors. After a stencil had been made for the whole length of film, it was placed into contact with the print to be colored and run at high speed (60 feet per minute) through a staining machine, a process repeated for each set of stencils and dyes to be applied. By 1910, Pathé Frères employed more than four hundred women in its stenciling operation at the Vincennes factory, and the process was used in Europe well into the 1930s.

In the United States, another form of stenciling was patented in 1916 by the St. Louis engraver Max



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[1] Hand-tinting in *Le voyage à travers l'impossible* (*The Impossible Voyage*; Georges Méliès, 1904). [2] Contemporary photograph of hand-coloring operations at Madame Tullier's workshop. [3] A hand-tinted frame from the conclusion of *The Great Train Robbery* (Edwin S. Porter, 1903). [4] Pathécolor stencil in *King Lear* (Gerolama Lo Savio, 1910), a production of Film d'Arte Italiano.



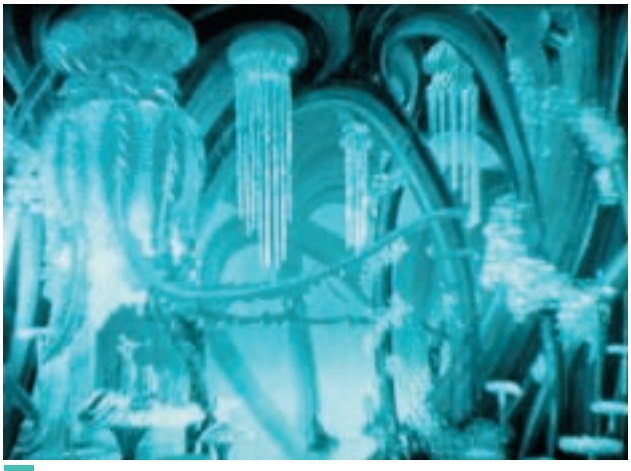
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[1] A frame from *The Birth of a Nation* (D. W. Griffith, 1915): the sepia-tinted interior of the Cameron mansion. [2] A frame from *The Birth of a Nation* (D. W. Griffith, 1915): the burning-of-Atlanta sequence tinted in infernal red. [3] Two-tinted frame in *Broken Blossoms* (D. W. Griffith, 1919): a nocturnal shade of blue characterizes the Limehouse at night. [4] Two-tinted frame in *The Thief of Bagdad* (Raoul Walsh, 1924): an aquamarine tint suffuses an enchanted undersea chamber.

Handschiegl and the cinematographer Alvin Wyckoff of the Famous Players–Lasky Corporation laboratory. Popularly known as the Handschiegl color process, it employed the principles of three-color lithography to machine-tint such big-budget studio productions as Cecil B. DeMille's *Joan, the Woman* (1917); Erich von Stroheim's *Greed* (1924); Rupert Julian's *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925); and King Vidor's *The Big Parade* (1925).

As film became a major international industry during the 1920s, however, the need to mass-produce prints led to the development of tinting and toning, both mechanized nonphotographic color processes. Tinting, the most commonly used, involved immersing black-and-white positive stock in a bath of dye, whose color was varied according to the mood and/or setting of a given scene, at least theoretically. In practice, the colors were often chosen arbitrarily from a range of exotically trade-named dyes, including Verdante, Azure, Nocturne, Purplehaze, Fleur de lis, Amaranth, Inferno, Argent, Rose doree, Firelight, Peachblow, and Sunshine.

Toning affected only the black-silver portion of the image; it was accomplished by chemically treating the silver to convert it into a dye composed of colored silver salts. Whereas tinting produced a uniform color throughout, toning colored only the darker area of the frame, leaving the lighter parts white. With care, the two processes could be used in combination to produce more elaborate effects, such as an orange-tinted sunset in a blue-toned sky, and by the early 1920s, 80 to 90 percent of all American films used some form of tinting or toning for at least some scenes. Yet the colors provided by both were notably artificial, and the coming of sound presented new problems because the dyes used in tinting and toning interfered with the sound track by absorbing



Tinting combined with toning in *The Bells* (James Young, 1926): Lionel Barrymore is bathed in a ghastly green tint, with snowflakes and other highlights toned white.

too much light. Eastman Kodak responded quickly in 1929 by introducing Sonochrome, a black-and-white positive stock available in a range of sixteen tinted bases, corresponding to the standard dyes used in tinting. By this time, however, developments in the field of color cinematography had overtaken the quest for color.

The principles on which color photography is based were first proposed by the Scottish physicist James Clerk Maxwell (1831–1879) in 1855 and demonstrated by him at the Royal Institution in London in 1861. At this time, it was known that light comprises a spectrum of different wavelengths that are perceived as different colors as they are absorbed and reflected by natural objects. What Maxwell discovered was that all natural colors in this spectrum are composed of different combinations of the three primary colors—red, yellow, and blue—which, when mixed together equally, produce white. Color, it followed, could be produced either by adding together various measures of the primary colors or by subtracting various measures from white light. These two methods, the additive and the subtractive, are the ones that have been used to produce color photographically in film.

The first process to employ these principles in motion-picture photography successfully was Charles Urban's two-color sequential additive system, Kinemacolor. It was based on the work of Brighton filmmaker G. A. Smith, who in 1906 had discovered that by fusing two colors—red and green—through persistence of vision, he could obtain a range of colors nearly equivalent to those produced by three. The American entrepreneur Charles Urban (1867–1942) bought the patent rights and demonstrated the system publicly as Kinemacolor before the Royal Society of Arts on December 9, 1908.

Urban and Smith began commercial operations shortly thereafter, forming the Natural Color Kinematograph Company to produce and distribute Kinemacolor films. At first, these were shown on an occasional basis in London, Nottingham, and Blackpool, but by April 1911, Urban had begun showing complete programs of Kinemacolor *actualités*, such as the coronation of George V, at the Scala theater in London. Kinemacolor's most spectacular production and greatest commercial success was the two-and-one-half-hour *Durbar at Dèlhi* (1912), shot on location in India by Urban and a crew of twenty-three cameramen. By 1913, Kinemacolor films were being shown regularly in thirteen countries, including the United States, where Kinemacolor of America was incorporated in 1910, and Urban had camera crews all over the world shooting and releasing new films at the rate of two to three per week.

Yet by 1915, Kinemacolor was all but defunct, a victim of patent litigation brought on by the rival Bioschemes Ltd. As a result, Smith's patent was revoked in April 1914. Other difficulties affecting Kinemacolor were the rising popularity of dramatic features at a time when the company was militantly committed to the factual film, and technological problems inherent in the system itself, among which were color fringing in moving objects and the poor registration of blues. Still, other systems were constantly being developed and tested, including such three-color additive systems as Gaumont's Chronochrome (patented 1912), which used a three-lens camera and projector, and such two-color nonsequential additive systems as Cinechrome (1914) and British Raycol (1929). In the two-color nonsequential additive systems, a single camera lens was fitted with a system of prisms that split the light beam in two, creating two pairs of red and green exposures simultaneously, which would be superimposed in projection. Ultimately, however, additive systems proved too complicated, costly, and imprecise to bring color wholesale into the cinema. The first entirely successful motion-picture color system was two-strip subtractive Technicolor.

The Technicolor Corporation was formed in 1915 in Boston by Dr. Herbert T. Kalmus (1881–1963), Dr. Daniel F. Comstock, and W. Burton Wescott as an offshoot of their successful industrial consulting firm, to exploit a two-color additive process in which a prismatic beam-splitter produced separate red and green exposures inside the camera and superimposed them in projection. The company produced only one film in this process, *The Gulf Between* (Irvin Willat, 1917); its failure led Kalmus to abandon the additive system for





(top left) A frame from the spectacular Bal Masqué sequence in *The Phantom of the Opera* (Rupert Julian, 1925; re-released 1929), shot in two-strip Technicolor (process no. 2).

(bottom left) Priscilla Moran and Anna May Wong in *The Toll of the Sea* (Chester M. Franklin, 1922), the first feature shot entirely in two-strip, two-color Technicolor (process no. 2).

a subtractive one. His goal was to have both color components printed in register on positive film stock and to eliminate the superimposition of images in projection (and thus special projectors). The new system, patented in 1922, used a beam-splitting camera to produce two separate negatives that were printed separately as positives on specially thin-based Kodak stock. These were then chemically treated to remove the silver and form transparent "relief images" of exposed gelatin, dyed red-orange on one print and green on the other. Finally, the two relief prints were cemented base to base for projection through an ordinary projector.

The industry was so excited by this innovation that Loew's Inc. offered to produce Technicolor's first film in the process, *The Toll of the Sea* (Chester M. Franklin, 1922), which was supervised by Joseph M. Schenck and released through Metro Film Company by Nicholas Schenck. The film was a great success, grossing more than $250,000 (of which Technicolor received approximately $165,000), and it demonstrated the commercial viability of subtractive Technicolor in no uncertain terms. Although its cost was inordinately high, this "cemented positive" process worked well enough to be used for color sequences in several major productions of 1923–1924, including Paramount's *The Ten Commandments* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1923) and MGM's *The Merry Widow* (Erich von Stroheim, 1925), and for such complete features as Douglas Fairbanks's *The Black Pirate* (Albert Parker, 1926).

In 1928, however, Technicolor introduced an improved two-color process in which the two relief prints became *matrices* for the transfer of dyes to a third and final print. Specifically, when the matrix prints were brought into contact with a blank, gelatin-coated film, the dyes were transferred in exact registration through a process known as *imbibition,* which became the basis for the Technicolor process from 1928 through the 1970s. Imbibition dye-transfer eliminated the use of a "cemented positive" and made it possible to mass-produce release prints from the matrices, which could simply be redyed between successive transfers.

The innovation of Technicolor's second subtractive system coincided with the coming of sound, and this circumstance helped create a boomlet for the process. For one thing, as noted earlier, dyes used in the nonphotographic tinting and toning processes so popular during the 1920s were rendered obsolete by sound because they interfered with the optical sound track. Although this problem was addressed by Eastman Kodak's introduction of Sonochrome in 1929, it gave Technicolor an open field during the most crucial year of the conversion. For another thing, many early sound films were musicals, a genre whose fantastic,



Poster advertising the two-color Technicolor sequence in *Gold Diggers of Broadway* (Roy Del Ruth, 1929).

spectacular nature was particularly suited to color representation. In fact, Technicolor's new process was first used for sequences in *Broadway Melody* (Harry Beaumont, 1929), and the first all-Technicolor sound films were Warner Bros.' *On with the Show* (Alan Crosland, 1929) and *Gold Diggers of Broadway* (Roy Del Ruth, 1929)—both smashing box-office hits, the latter grossing more than $3.5 million.

In 1930, Technicolor was under contract for thirty-six features, some of the most lavishly produced in that year, including *Whoopee!* (Thorton Freeland); *No, No, Nanette* (Clarence Badger); *Rio Rita* (Luther Reed); and *Paramount on Parade* (Dorothy Arzner and Otto Brower). Yet by 1932, the production of Technicolor films had nearly ceased. The sudden rush to color failed because audiences grew increasingly dissatisfied with the poor registration of the two-color process in which flesh tones could vary from pink to orange, and also because the process itself was expensive, adding as much as 30 percent (or $100,000 to $300,000 in Depression currency) to the production costs of the average feature and raising distribution costs from three to five cents a foot over black and white. By contrast, recent improvements (c. 1925) in Eastman's panchromatic stock had made it sensitive to a wider range of tones than ever before and lowered its price, and in 1928, tungsten incandescent lighting had been established as the relatively inexpensive norm (as opposed to the **arc lighting** required by Technicolor) for use with it. Thus, black and white became the standard medium for the sound film through the early 1950s, when less expensive color and lighting systems were devised.

In 1932, however, Technicolor perfected the three-color system, whose predictability and accuracy were to give it a virtual monopoly over the production of color in motion pictures for the next twenty years. The camera employed a prismatic beam-splitter behind the lens to expose three separate black-and-white negatives running through two gates at right angles to one another (see Figure 7.1). The gate on the left contained a "bipack" of two negatives, the one in front dyed red-orange so that it absorbed the blue light and filtered the red light through to the one behind it. The gate on the right contained a single negative sensitive to green. Each of these "color separation" negatives would be developed as matrices for the same imbibition dye-transfer process used previously by

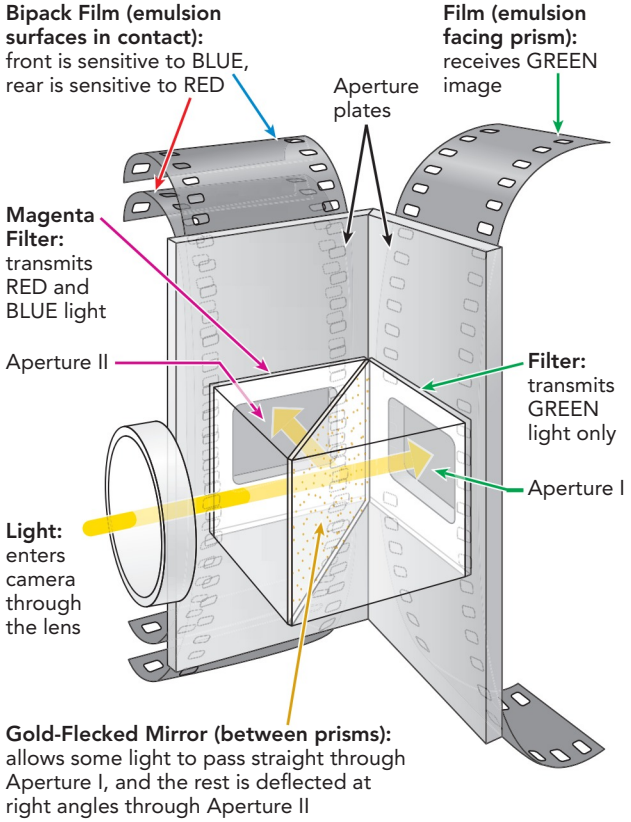


Figure 7.1: Diagram of Technicolor's three-color system.



Disney's *Flowers and Trees* (Burt Gillett, 1932).

Technicolor's two-color systems, resulting in a single three-color release print. (A blank silver negative containing the optical soundtrack was combined with the matrices during the imbibition stage, and Technicolor sometimes used a black fourth matrix to achieve a subtler range of colors, as was the case with *Gone with the Wind* [Victor Fleming, 1939]).

The three-color system was technically superior to any yet produced, but still it had its drawbacks. The "three-strip" cameras, which cost $30,000 apiece to manufacture, were large and heavy, complicating location shooting, and the process of exposing three black-and-white negatives simultaneously required a great deal of light, which further increased production costs. Furthermore, Technicolor standardized three-strip filming procedures and exerted a large measure of control over production: producers had to rent their cameras, hire their operators, use Technicolor makeup and "color consultants," and process their film in Technicolor laboratories.

For all of these reasons, plus the general decline in film attendance caused by the Depression, producers were a good deal more conservative about adopting three-color Technicolor than its predecessors. Technicolor, for similar reasons, did not want to venture into production on its own, so it offered the process initially to the small independents Walt Disney and Pioneer Films. Disney became the first to use it in his Silly Symphony cartoon *Flowers and Trees* (1932) and *The Three Little Pigs* (1933), which were so successful—both winning Oscars and *Pigs* grossing more than $750,000—that Disney contracted with Technicolor for a whole series of films, and ultimately adopted the process for all of his studio's productions.

The first live-action film in three-color Technicolor was Pioneer Films' *La Cucaracha* (1934), a thinly plotted two-reel short focusing on the romantic passions of two cantina dancers. The film was basically an extended test of the process under conditions of live production, and it impressed the industry so favorably that it won the 1934 Academy Award for the Best Comedy Short Subject. Buoyed by this success, Pioneer ventured the first three-color feature, an eighty-three-minute version of William Makepeace Thackeray's classic Victorian novel *Vanity Fair* (1847–1848), titled *Becky Sharp* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1935). At first, audiences rushed to see the $1 million costume film, but after a few weeks interest peaked, and the release ended in commercial failure.

Undaunted, Kalmus organized a British subsidiary, Technicolor Ltd., which in 1936 produced England's first Technicolor feature, the race-track melodrama *Wings of the Morning* (Harold Schuster). In Hollywood, the majors began to test the waters cautiously—20th Century–Fox with a rendition of the classic American Indian saga *Ramona* (Henry King, 1936) and Paramount with *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (Henry Hathaway, 1936), the first Technicolor film shot entirely on location. Yet it was David O. Selznick's newly formed independent company, Selznick International, that proved the commercial viability of Technicolor feature production once and for all with star-studded hits such as *The Garden of Allah* (Richard Boleslavsky, 1936) with Charles Boyer and Marlene Dietrich, *Nothing Sacred* (William Wellman, 1937) with Fredric March and Carole Lombard, and *A Star Is Born* (William Wellman, 1937) with Fredric March and Janet Gaynor, the first and last of which were honored with Special Academy Awards for their color cinematography—to the team of W. Howard Greene and Harold Rosson.

Selznick scored again in 1938 with *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Norman Taurog), and by this time, nearly the whole industry had climbed on the bandwagon: MGM with *Sweethearts* (W. S. Van Dyke, 1938; first Academy Award in the newly created Color Cinematography classification to Oliver Marsh); Paramount with *Ebb Tide* (James Hogan, 1937), *Vogues of 1938* (Irving Cummings, 1938), and *Men with Wings* (William Wellman, 1938); 20th Century–Fox with *Kentucky* (David Butler, 1938); Samuel Goldwyn Productions with the lavish musical revue *The Goldwyn Follies* (George Marshall, 1938); Alexander Korda's



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[1] W. Howard Greene and Hal Rosson won a special Academy Award for cinematography for *The Garden of Allah* (Richard Boleslavsky, 1936), shot in Technicolor's three-strip, three-color system (process no. 4). [2] *Nothing Sacred* (William Wellman, 1937; cinematographer W. Howard Greene), shot in Technicolor (process no. 4).

London Films with *Drums* (Zoltan Korda, 1938)—and most prominently, Walt Disney with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), the first full-length animated feature; and Warner Bros. with *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (Michael Curtiz and William Keighley, 1938), a film whose aesthetic use of the Technicolor system earned it three Academy Awards.

By the end of the year, Technicolor had twenty-five features in production, and on the books for the banner year of 1939–1940 were *Drums along the Mohawk* (John Ford, 1939), Warner Bros.' *The Privates Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (Michael Curtiz, 1939), two Disney features—*Fantasia* (1940) and *Pinocchio* (1940)—and the era's quintessential blockbusters, MGM's *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939) and David O. Selznick's *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939). Though not technically a full-length color film, because it began and ended in sepia, *The Wizard of Oz* sustained its illusion of fantasy through the most imaginative and sophisticated use of Technicolor yet. *Gone with the Wind*, conversely, was the first film to be shot using Technicolor's new, faster, fine-grained stock—a major technical breakthrough in that it cut lighting levels by 50 percent, bringing them closer to those used for monochrome. This in turn provided for the use of smaller directional units for facial lighting, improved color rendition (especially in the green part of the spectrum), and increased depth of field. Appropriately, when *Gone with the Wind* swept the Academy Awards for 1939, Ray Rennahan and Ernest Haller shared the Oscar for its cinematography, and William Cameron Menzies received a special plaque for his "outstanding achievement in the use of color for the enhancement of dramatic mood" in the film.

During the 1940s, the improved three-color system received greater use in such major productions as *Blood and Sand* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1941), *The Black Swan* (Henry King, 1942), *Henry V* (Laurence Olivier, 1944), *Leave Her to Heaven* (John M. Stahl, 1945), and *Black Narcissus* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, 1947), but it was still limited by its expense and the Technicolor Corporation's virtual monopoly of the field.



Black Narcissus (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressbuger, 1947), shot by Britain's leading Technicolor cinematographer, Jack Cardiff, won the Academy Award for Best Color Cinematography.



(left) Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh in *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939).

The process was improved again in 1941 by the introduction of Technicolor Monopack, a multilayered film stock based on Eastman Kodachrome. Monopack produced a direct color positive from exposure in a conventional camera, which was then printed through red, green, and blue filters as separate matrices for the Technicolor dye-transfer process. The new stock proved valuable for location shooting, because it eliminated the bulky three-strip camera, and it was first used for aerial sequences and exteriors. By 1944, Monopack had been improved to the point that it could be used to shoot entire features, and Kalmus seriously considered abandoning the three-strip process in favor of it. However, the postwar film attendance boom escalated the demand for Technicolor services and prevented any wholesale conversion until the 1950s, when the rival Eastmancolor system—cheaper, faster, but less stable—rendered the three-strip Technicolor camera obsolete.

Problems of Early Sound Recording

The introduction of sound is analogous in almost every respect to the invention of the cinema itself. In each case, the technological principles on which the invention was based had been known for decades prior to their combination into a workable apparatus. In each case, the apparatus was developed and exploited for the purposes of novelty and commerce without a thought to aesthetic ends (early "movies" are comparable to early "talkies" in that both initially exploited their most novel feature at the expense of proportion and common sense). Finally, there was a long delay between the introduction of the sophisticated machine and the sophisticated artistic use of it.

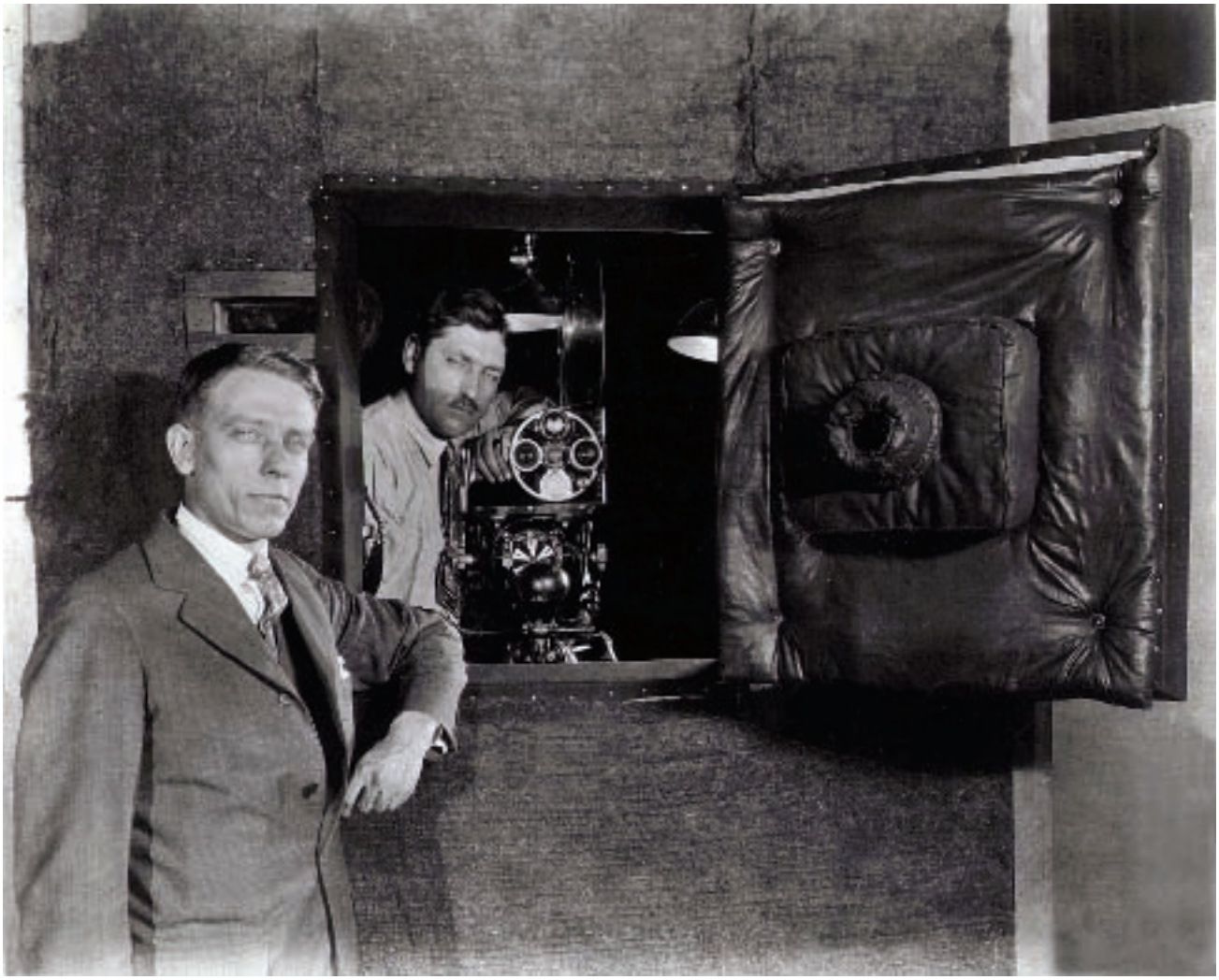
The aesthetic and technical problems caused by the introduction of sound to the cinema were immense, and if the transition was orderly from a corporate perspective, inside the studio soundstages, confusion often bordered on chaos. For one thing, there were initially three competing systems (Western Electric Vitaphone, Fox Movietone, and RCA Photophone), none of which was compatible with the others, and the equipment for all three was so repeatedly modified and redesigned that it was sometimes obsolete before being uncrated.

The most serious problems involved sound recording in production (postrecording did not exist yet), but less spectacular difficulties also occurred at the exhibition sites. Before 1928, projection depended on the regular but intermittent motion of the film strip as it passed, frame by frame, between the lamp and shutter and the lens. To ensure fidelity of reproduction, however, the optically recorded sound track had to move with constant linear velocity across the photoelectric sound head. And because in all optical systems the image track and the sound track were separated by only twenty frames, intermittent motion would be transferred to the sound head, causing audio distortion. RCA met the problems first with a mechanical "compensator" and then with a series of filters, which were not perfected and adopted as the industry standard until 1930.

A further difficulty for exhibitors during the early transitional period was the necessity of maintaining both sound-on-disc and sound-on-film reproduction equipment until a uniform industry standard was chosen. As late as 1931, studios were still releasing films in both formats to accommodate theaters owned by sound-on-disc interests.

More important, as it has become almost axiomatic to say, the movies ceased to move when they began to talk, because between 1928 and 1931 they virtually regressed to their infancy in terms of editing and camera movement. In large part, this was because the early microphones that were used to record sound had two substantial defects. First, they had a very limited range, so that to be heard on the sound track at all, actors were forced to speak directly into them. This had the regressive effect of rendering actors motionless within the frame while they delivered their lines, and led to some remarkable exercises in concealing microphones on the set, such as in flowerpots, ship's lanterns, and clumps of sagebrush.

The second major defect of the microphones was, paradoxically, that within their limited range they were highly sensitive and omnidirectional—they picked up and recorded *every sound* made within their range on the set. This characteristic not only created problems in sound engineering, but rendered the camera almost totally inert: in order to avoid distortion in the synchronized sound track, all cameras were motorized to run at a standard speed (24 fps) in 1929. Yet motorization also caused cameras to make a noisy, whirring clatter that would inevitably be picked up by the microphones. To prevent this, early



A Vitaphone camera in its soundproof booth.

sound cameras and their operators were at first enclosed in soundproof glass-paneled booths, 6 feet on a side, ironically dubbed "iceboxes" because they were so hot and stuffy. This practice literally imprisoned the camera, because it could neither tilt nor track (although it could pan as much as 30 degrees on its tripod), which accounts for the static nature of so many early sound films. At their worst, these resembled the "filmed theater" of Méliès and *film d'art* far more than they resembled their immediate silent predecessors.

In fact, sound recording briefly rendered the cinema even *more* static than the filmed plays of its first decade because actors had to keep within range of both a static microphone *and* a static camera. Not only was the frame or the camera itself rendered motionless, but the actors had to remain motionless *within* the frame (that is, within a given camera setup), if they were to have their voices picked up by the crude recording equipment. In filmed plays such as *Queen Elizabeth* (1912), the actors, at least, could move around on the set, even though the cameras didn't move at all, but now, they too were rendered immobile.

Another production problem was studio lighting. The carbon arc lamps that had provided principal lighting during the 1920s produced a humming noise and could not be used when recording synchronized dialogue. In 1930, muting circuits were selectively introduced in the arcs, but most studios had by then converted to **tungsten incandescent** lamps as their principal lighting source. Because these were less intense than arcs, they had their own liabilities—for example, the sheer numbers required to light for two or three cameras at once, as was often the case in the early sound period, when multiple shots would be made of the same scene to avoid editing the sound track in postproduction. Arcs continued to be used selectively

throughout this era—providing, for instance, the main lighting source for Technicolor production—and both tungsten incandescent and arc lamps remain the principal sources of film lighting today.

The impact of sound recording on film editing was probably the single most important factor in causing the regression of the transitional era. In the silent film, editing was unrestricted by content: dialogue was scarcely ever spoken word by word, and intertitles could either encapsulate it or eliminate it altogether to facilitate the montage structure of a given sequence. In the early sound film, editing—like camera movement, placement, and lighting—was subordinated absolutely to the technology of recording dialogue and became purely functional, rather than expressive. In sound-on-disc films, scenes were initially made to play for nearly ten minutes in order for dialogue to be recorded continuously on 16-inch discs. Editing these scenes was out of the question, of course, until the technology of re-recording was perfected in the early 1930s, although if multiple cameras were used to shoot the same scene, some variety could be added to the image track.

Sound-on-film systems also militated against editing at first because of the necessary displacement between image and sound track in optical systems, in which the sound runs twenty frames in advance of its corresponding image. This initially made it impossible to edit a composite optical print without eliminating portions of the relevant sound. In both sound-on-disc and sound-on-film systems, therefore, most early editing was largely *transitional*—a device for changing linearly from one scene to the next, rather than a mode for expressing multiple points of view—because, in general, cuts could be made (as the camera could be moved) only when no sound was being recorded synchronously on the set.

Crosscutting between actors speaking to one another, close-ups intercut with shots of other spatial lengths, the editing syntax of Griffith, the montage structure of Eisenstein, and the fluid, expressive camera movement introduced by Murnau and Freund—all were effectively, if temporarily, eliminated by the clumsy technology of early sound recording. They were replaced by a series of talking photographs taken from the same angle at medium range and varied only when the talking stopped. Ironically, Edison's original conception of the film as a sequence of moving pictures to accompany and illustrate sound recordings was fully realized in the first few years of the sound era.



Greta Garbo and Florence Lake in *Romance* (Clarence Brown, 1930).



Gary Cooper in *City Streets* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1931).

To make matters worse, the studios were so anxious to exploit the novelty of sound and amortize their borrowings that they turned to "canned theater," in which Broadway plays and musicals were transferred from stage to screen verbatim, with little or no adaptation. The impulse to record stage performances live on film at the beginning of the sound era was the same as that which had motivated the *film d'art* craze of 1908–1912, and its failure was no less emphatic. The public rapidly tired of these "100 percent all-talking" productions, but they had the lasting effect of bringing Broadway players and directors to Hollywood on a more or less permanent basis. Similarly, the urgent necessity for dialogue scripts revolutionized the profession of screenwriting and caused the studios to import literary talent from the East in the form of editors and critics, playwrights and novelists, many of whom stayed on to make lasting contributions to the quality and sophistication of American sound films.

Actors with stage experience were especially valuable during the early sound era, because directors could no longer shout out instructions on the set as they had done previously and therefore needed players who could work on their own through long dialogue takes. They also needed players with a good voice and clear articulation, which meant that stage actors, and film actors with stage experience, rapidly replaced many silent stars who spoke with heavy foreign accents (such as Emil Jannings, Pola Negri, Vilma Banky, and Lya De Putti) or whose voices somehow did not match their screen images (such as Norma Talmadge, Colleen Moore, Corinne Griffith, and John Gilbert). Other silent stars (such as Greta Garbo, Gary Cooper, and Janet Gaynor) were able to make the transition with the aid of voice specialists and diction coaches from the theater world.

The advent of sound brought other new arrivals to Hollywood. Sound technicians from the broadcasting and telephone industries who had no understanding of filmmaking suddenly appeared on the studio sets, endowed with tremendous authority to determine camera and microphone placement.

The Theoretical Debate over Sound

Indeed, at the outset, sound recording seemed so great a threat to the cinema as a creative form that many directors and theorists of film violently opposed its arrival. They were appalled that the cinema, which was currently in its most advanced state of articulation, might be permanently retarded by the public's passing fancy for a crude novelty. Others, such as Eisenstein and Pudovkin, perceived the threat posed by sound but also recognized its potential for adding a new dimension to the medium. In "Sound and Image," a manifesto published on August 5, 1928, Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Alexandrov correctly predicted:

> The sound film is a two-edged sword, and it is very probable that its users will follow the path of least resistance, that is, they will attempt simply to satisfy the public's curiosity. . . . This first period of sensationalism will not prejudice the new art's development, but there will be a second period—a terrible period. With the decline of the first exploration of practical possibilities, people will try to substitute dramas taken from "good literature" and will make other attempts to have theater invade the screen.
>
> Used in this way, sound will destroy the art of montage.

Then, they offered an antidote to the situation:

> Only the use of sound as counterpoint to visual montage offers new possibilities of developing and perfecting montage. . . . Sound, treated as a new element of montage (and as an element independent of the visual image), will inevitably

introduce a new, extremely effective means of expressing and resolving the complex problems which we have not been able to solve so far. It is impossible to find the necessary solutions if we have only visual elements with which to work.

Eisenstein, especially, spoke from a long and generally negative experience of trying to integrate his titles with his images. Titles were a definite liability to the silent cinema because they interfered with the flow of its narratives and the rhythms of its montage. By eliminating the necessity for titles, the sound film had liberated the cinema from its thirty-year bondage to the printed word and provided it with a narrative dimension that need not interfere with the visual dynamics of montage. The task now was not to reshackle the medium to the spoken word of the talkie.

Another European cinematic formalist had similar feelings about sound. The young French director René Clair (born René-Lucien Chomette, 1898–1981) wrote in 1929 that he was opposed to the "100 percent talkie" but could see distinct possibilities for the creative use of sound in films:

The talking film is not everything. There is also the sound film—on which the last hopes of the advocates of the silent film are pinned. They count on the sound film to ward off the danger represented by the advent of talkies. . . . [If] *imitation* of real noises seems limited and disappointing, it is possible that an *interpretation* of noises may have more of a future in it. [original emphasis]

Clair reserved special praise for the early MGM musical *The Broadway Melody* (Harry Beaumont, 1929) as a film that used its sound track with great intelligence. He particularly admired a sequence in which the noises of a door being slammed and a car driving off are heard on the sound track but not illustrated on the image track, which contains only a close-up of the heroine's anguished face witnessing the departure. In another sequence, the heroine is on the verge of tears, and as her face disappears in a fade-out, we hear a single sob from the blackened screen. Clair concludes from this: "In these two instances the sound, at an opportune moment, has replaced the shot. It is by this economy of means that the sound film will most probably secure original effects."

What the three Soviet filmmakers and Clair had all realized was that sound recording posed a threat to the cinema *only* if the microphone became as slavishly subservient to the spoken word, or to "naturalistic" sound, as the early camera had been to empirical reality in its unwillingness to disrupt the natural continuity of time and space. So they denounced **synchronous** or "naturalistic" sound, whereby the audience *hears* exactly what it sees on the screen as it sees it and sees exactly what it hears on the sound track as it hears it, as a noncreative form of recording that threatened the formal achievement of the silent cinema. And they advocated instead the use of **asynchronous** or **contrapuntal** sound—sound that would counterpoint the images that accompanied it for expressive effect in the same way that conflicting shots in a silent montage sequence counterpointed one another. That is, they endorsed sound recording as an extension and an expansion of montage, in which noise, dialogue, and music were all to be used in counterpoint to visual images, similar to individual shots in a montage sequence.

From 1928 to 1931, the main emphasis had been on obtaining high-quality sound in production, with little thought given to the possibility of modifying the sound track after it had been recorded. The idea that sound as originally produced on the set was the necessary end product of the recording process had several sources. One was that the model for early sound recording was live radio broadcasting, where sound was produced for spontaneous transmission. Because many of the audio technicians who flooded the gates of Hollywood in the early years of the transition came directly from the broadcast industry, they brought their practices and preconceptions with them intact.

A deeper reason lay in the conservatism of the American producers, who believed that an absolute pairing of sound and image was necessary to avoid confusing their literal-minded audiences. They felt that to separate sound and image—even to the small extent of recording naturalistic sound but not visualizing it (for example, having a door slam offscreen, as in *The Broadway Melody*)—would disorient audience perception, just as their predecessors had, thirty years earlier, been loath to fragment the visual reality continuum.

So for several years, both practice and ideology in the American studios dictated that sound and image be recorded simultaneously, with the result that everything heard on the sound track would be seen on the screen and vice versa. Thus, the huge number of "100 percent talkies" (films such as *Lights of New York*) were little more than illustrated radio plays. On the other side of the issue were the cinematic formalists, such as Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Clair, who saw contrapuntal sound as the only way to use the new technique—sound in which music, choruses, sound effects, and perhaps a bare minimum of dialogue would be used to counterpoint and comment on the visuals. The controversy was ultimately resolved through the discovery of a process known as

postsynchronization (or **dubbing**), which permitted synchronous and asynchronous sound to be used together, consistently and simultaneously within the same film.

The Adjustment to Sound

Postsynchronization was first used by the American director King Vidor (1894–1982) for his talking picture *Hallelujah!* (1929), which is also generally regarded as the first major film of the sound era. *Hallelujah!* was shot on location in and around Memphis, Tennessee, with an all-black cast, and its final sequence depicts a wild chase through an Arkansas swamp. Vidor shot the entire sequence silently with a continuously moving camera, then later in the studio added to it a sound track containing naturalistic noises of the pursuit—breaking branches, screeching birds, heavy breathing, and so on—all of which had been separately recorded.

Given the crudity of early sound-recording equipment, this was a technically brilliant achievement. Yet because the sound track was physically separate from the image track, though printed beside it on the same strip of film, the potential for postdubbing sound had existed in the sound-on-film systems from the time of their invention. Vidor, however, was the first to realize that the microphone and the camera are independent instruments and to realize simultaneously that sound could create a psychological impact quite independent of the images.

Another American director, Lewis Milestone (1895–1980), used postdubbing for the battlefield sequences of his great pacifist film *All Quiet on the Western Front* in 1930, shooting them with a mobile silent camera on location and dubbing in the battle sounds later. In 1931, Milestone was able to keep his camera constantly in motion during the fast-talking



Nina Mae McKinney and Daniel L. Haynes in *Hallelujah!* (King Vidor, 1929).

dialogue comedy *The Front Page*, adapted from the stage play by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur. Ernst Lubitsch also used dubbing in his first sound films, the dynamic musicals *The Love Parade* (1929) and *Monte Carlo* (1930), as did René Clair in *Sous les toits de Paris* (*Under the Roofs of Paris*, 1930). These films and others like them demonstrate a gradual shift in emphasis from production recording to re-recording during the period 1929–1931, with increased importance finally being given to the latter.

In all of the cases just cited, sound was recorded and manipulated on a single track, but Rouben Mamoulian (1897–1987), a Broadway stage director, introduced a new element into sound recording when he used two separate microphones to record overlapping dialogue in a single scene of *Applause* (1929) and mixed them together on the sound track. Earlier sound tracks had consisted of a single channel, which meant that there was no way to isolate one type of sound from another. Everybody on the set spoke into the same microphone, and there could be no background music or sound effects while dialogue was being delivered unless these were provided off-camera simultaneously as the lines were spoken. By introducing two microphones and mixing the sound from each, Mamoulian opened up the possibility of multiple-channel recording and post-recording, which would permit the precise manipulation of all sounds on the track—a possibility realized for four-channel recording as early as 1932. Two years later, in *City Streets* (1931), Mamoulian introduced the first sound "flashback," as snatches of dialogue spoken earlier in the film recur on the sound track, accompanied by a close-up of the heroine, suggesting the process of memory.

In general practice, however, one type of sound or the other dominated the sound track through 1932—that is, there was either dialogue or music on the track, but rarely both together unless they had been recorded simultaneously on the set, as they sometimes were. By 1933, however, technology had been introduced to



Joan Peers, Fuller Mellish Jr., and Helen Morgan in *Applause* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1929).

mix separately recorded tracks for background music, sound effects, and synchronized dialogue without audible distortion at the dubbing stage, and by the late 1930s, it was possible in the RCA system to record music on multiple channels.

By 1935, the supervising dubbing mixer on a production often occupied a position equal to that of the film editor. The subsequent introduction of elaborate dialogue equalizers to alter level and frequency, and of compression and noise-suppression technology, further refined the dubbing process. By the late 1930s, postsynchronization, or re-recording, originated as a means of adding sound effects to moving camera sequences, had become a process for the production of the entire release track. Today, the practice is nearly universal for theatrically released features, and it is not uncommon for as much as 90 percent of the dialogue in these films to be re-recorded in postproduction.

With the introduction of magnetic sound in the late 1950s, any number of separate channels could be rerecorded onto a single track or stereophonically rerecorded onto as many as six tracks, and numerous widescreen epics in the 1950s and the 1960s used up to fifty channels for mass scenes. In the 1970s, sound quality was further enhanced through the adoption of a wireless eight-track recording system that used radio microphones and, near the end of the decade, nonmagnetic stereo-optical Dolby surround sound for playback in exhibition. Today, most film sound is recorded and reproduced digitally.

The practice of postsynchronization was a prime force in liberating the sound-film camera from its glass-paneled booth and the sound film generally from the single-minded notion that everything seen on the screen must be heard on the sound track, and vice versa. In its infancy, sound recording had bound film to the laws of empirical reality more securely than ever before, but postsynchronization reintroduced the plastic, manipulative element. From the experience of dubbing, directors gradually came to understand that the most "cinematic" sound track was neither wholly synchronous nor asynchronous but a composite of many different types of sound, all of which were under their control—perhaps even more so than the visuals, because sound could be synthetically produced.

Other developments that helped liberate the sound film from its initial stasis were more purely technological. Most such problems had been resolved by 1933 through various combinations of practical necessity, ingenuity, and technological refinement. By 1931, for example, both sound-on-disc and multiple-camera filming had been abandoned, and all studios had removed their cameras from the "iceboxes" and converted to the use of **blimps**. These were lightweight, soundproof housings that encased the cameras to muffle the clatter of their motors and enabled the studios to record synchronous sound outside of the booth. Within several years, smaller, quieter, self-insulating cameras were produced, eliminating the need for external soundproofing altogether. Blimping permitted studios to return to the free use of arc lamps, although most continued to employ tungsten units during the 1930s for "soft light" effects.

Tracking was again made possible by the introduction of a wide range of boom cranes, camera supports, and steerable dollies between 1931 and 1933. Microphones, too, became increasingly mobile as a variety of microphone booms were developed from 1930 onward. These long radial arms suspended the mike just above the set and out of the frame, allowing it to follow the movements of the actors and rendering the stationary, clumsily concealed microphones of the early years obsolete. Microphones also became more directional during the 1930s—better able to "hear" at one frequency or in one direction only—and track-noise suppression techniques came into use as early as 1931.

During the same years, technology was introduced that greatly facilitated the editing process. The sound Moviola first became available in 1930 and went through several stages of evolution during the decade. Adapted from the silent film-editing machine of the same name, the sound Moviola consisted of contiguous picture and sound heads that could be operated separately or locked together to run in synchronization. Optical sound film was pulled through the machine by a continuously moving sprocket drive, as in a projector, but could be stopped and moved across either head by hand.

In 1932, the system known as "rubber numbering" or "edge numbering" was introduced to ensure the precise synchronization of sound and image track in the cutting process itself. Machine-coded footage numbers were stamped on the outer edges of the image and sound track for each shot, so that both tracks could be edited autonomously and resynchronized as empirically measured units. It was only in the mid-1930s that the technical innovations of 1929 to 1932 began to have their full effect.

Even then, some aspects of the recording process were not fully understood, and optical systems were still of two separate types: variable density and variable area. In the former, the density of the sound track varies longitudinally from opaque to transparent along the



The sound Moviola (c. 1930).

length of the film strip; in the latter, there is no gradation of variants but a binary modulation of two densities, complete opacity and complete transparency, over the width (or area) of the track. The variable-density format, first used by Fox Movietone in 1927, was superior in dialogue reproduction, while variable area, introduced by RCA Photophone in 1928, was superior in musical reproduction, owing to its higher output and greater frequency range. From 1928 to 1935, variable area suffered from volumetric distortion at the high and low extremes of voice frequency, and it was assumed by RCA engineers to be a nonlinear system, because variable density was presumably linear. Not until these technicians experimented with transferring the variable-area sound track for Rouben Mamoulian's *Becky Sharp* (1935) to variable density did they discover that the opposite was true.

Thus, optical sound had been in use in the industry for more than eight years before its fundamental nature was understood. When this finally occurred, RCA engineers were able to design a compressor for variable-area recording that eliminated distortion in dialogue, and it was put into use in the dubbing stage in 1936. In 1937, RCA began to manufacture compressors to be used in original recording equipment on the set, and after 1938, compressors were used in all variable-area recording. The format's superior volume and frequency range then made it preferable to variable density for all types of sound, and by 1945, the latter format had been gradually phased out.



Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire in *Roberta* (William Seiter, 1935).



08

The Sound Film and the American Studio System

New Genres and Old

Sound radically changed the configuration of the Western cinema. In the United States, it gave rise to important new genres and a system of production that determined the character of American films for more than twenty years. The most significant of the new genres was the musical film, whose development parallels that of the sound film. At first, these movie musicals were little more than filmed theater, but within a few years, the form had grown enough in cinematic sophistication to become the primary genre of 1930s cinema. This was largely the work of two men: Busby Berkeley (1895–1976) and Fred Astaire (1899–1987).

A dance director from the New York stage, Berkeley came to Hollywood to work for Samuel Goldwyn in 1930, but his genius was not revealed until he moved to Warner Bros. in 1933. There, as dance director for musicals such as *42nd Street* (Lloyd Bacon, 1933), *Gold Diggers of 1933* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1933), *Footlight Parade* (Lloyd Bacon, 1933), *Dames* (Ray Enright, 1934), and *Gold Diggers of 1937* (Lloyd Bacon, 1937)—most of which starred some combination of Dick Powell, Joan Blondell, and Ruby Keeler—he developed a flamboyant style that turned his production numbers into surreal visual fantasias. Based on the use of swooping aerial photography (or "crane choreography"),

kaleidoscopic lenses, highly expressive camera movement, and sophisticated montage techniques, Berkeley's production numbers come closer to an experimental cinema of abstract impressionism than to anything in traditional narrative film.

Fred Astaire, by contrast, achieved a much greater integration of music and dance with narrative in the series of RKO musicals in which he played opposite Ginger Rogers between 1933 (*Flying Down to Rio*, Thornton Freeland) and 1939 (*The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle*, H. C. Potter). Beginning as a performer, Astaire left an extremely successful stage career to work in films, and he went on to direct and choreograph his dance sequences in *Top Hat* (Mark Sandrich, 1935), *Swing Time* (George Stevens, 1936), *Follow the Fleet* (Mark Sandrich, 1936), *A Damsel in Distress* (George Stevens, 1937), *Shall We Dance* (Mark Sandrich, 1937), and *Carefree* (Mark Sandrich, 1938), developing a sophisticated but highly functional camera style in which the camera itself became a partner in the dance through cutting and movement designed to preserve its physical integrity. (Astaire often worked with a dance director or choreographer who received official billing in the credits; his closest collaborator in this regard was Hermes Pan [1910–1990].)

Another contribution to sound-film genres was made by Walt Disney (1901–1966). Unhampered by the restrictions of early sound-filming procedures, Disney could combine sound and image in an expressive manner, impossible for his peers in the live-action narrative cinema, and nevertheless achieve perfect frame-by-frame synchronization. The success of his first musical cartoon, *Steamboat Willie* (1928), which introduced Mickey Mouse to the world, and his Silly Symphony shorts, in which all of the action is set to music, and which culminated in 1933 with the immensely popular all-color hit *The Three Little Pigs*, led Disney to produce three extraordinary animated



Busby Berkeley's choreography in *Dames* (Ray Enright, 1934).



Walt Disney with animation cels from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Dave Hand, 1937).

color features before World War II: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Pinocchio* (1940), and the experimental *Fantasia* (1940), which attempted a total fusion of animated visuals and classical orchestral scores.

At the other end of the spectrum, the new realism permitted by sound bred a cycle of tersely directed urban gangster films that forged a new generic tradition, exploiting armed violence and tough vernacular speech in a context of social alienation, such as Mervyn LeRoy's *Little Caesar* (1930), William Wellman's *The Public Enemy* (1931), and Howard Hawks's *Scarface* (1932). In 1933–1934, however, the brutal violence of these films provoked a public outcry. This produced a cycle of prison films, such as Lloyd Bacon's *San Quentin* (1937), and socially oriented crime films, among them William Wyler's *Dead End* (1937), Fritz Lang's *You Only Live Once* (1937), and Raoul Walsh's *The Roaring Twenties* (1939), later in the decade.

Another tough-talking, realistic film cycle that emerged from the early sound years was that of the newspaper picture. Comprising films such as *The Front Page* (Lewis Milestone, 1931), *Five Star Final* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1931), *Scandal Sheet* (John Cromwell, 1931), and *Platinum Blonde* (Frank Capra, 1931), the cycle was immensely popular during the 1930s and important for helping to refine the technique of the dialogue film. Although many newspaper films were made according to formula, the cycle produced several comic masterpieces (such as Howard Hawks's *His Girl Friday* [1940]—a remake of *The Front Page* with the gender roles switched) and influenced the content of many more, including Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941), whose central figure is a newspaper magnate.

The historical biography, or **biopic**, was another important sound genre. The vogue began in 1933 with the international triumph of Alexander Korda's *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, the first British film to achieve success in the United States. *Henry VIII* had its origins in the lavish *Kostümfilm* pioneered by Ernst Lubitsch in postwar Germany, but the addition of sound enhanced the historical verisimilitude of the genre so enormously as to transform it. Between 1934 and 1940, historical biographies became staple products of every major American and British studio and were very successful in the international market.

In addition to creating new genres, sound permanently changed some older ones. Perhaps the most vital of silent genres, slapstick comedy, was replaced in the 1930s by the anarchic dialogue comedies of the Marx Brothers and W. C. Fields, and the **screwball comedies** of such directors as Frank Capra and Howard Hawks. The screwball comedy was a film type characterized by wisecracking dialogue, furious pacing, and a certain element of visual burlesque carried over from the silent slapstick days. The focus of the action was usually a couple in a bizarre predicament.

In the 1940s, screwball comedy provided a precedent for the darker social satire of the writer-director Preston Sturges (1898–1959), who, between 1940 and 1944, produced eight films, mainly for Paramount, that are recognized today as important and highly original contributions to the American comic tradition. The objects of Sturges's satire, however, were much more serious than the frivolous rich of the screwball comedy: American politics (*The Great McGinty* [1940]), American materialism and avarice (*Christmas in July* [1940], *The Palm Beach Story* [1942]), American sexual attitudes (*The Lady Eve* [1941]), American small-town life (*The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* [1944], *Hail the Conquering Hero* [1944]), and American cinema (*Sullivan's Travels* [1941]). At a time when Hollywood was unabashedly extolling the virtues of American society for the purposes of war propaganda, Sturges's films offered audiences a vision of a corrupt, ridiculous, but often vital people whose chief flaw was a profound lack of self-knowledge.



William Demarest and Betty Hutton in *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* (Preston Sturges, 1944).

Studio Politics and the Production Code

It is impossible to comprehend American film during the 1930s without understanding the mechanisms of the Hollywood studio system. The great studios were founded in the era before World War I, when the Motion Picture Patents Company was destroyed and the independents moved to assume monopolistic control over film production, distribution, and exhibition. Through a series of complicated business maneuvers, both legal and illegal, they succeeded, and by the end of the war the studios were on the brink of becoming the vast industrial empires of popular mythology. In the period of economic growth that followed the war, Wall Street began to invest heavily in the studios for both financial and political reasons. For Hollywood films to extol the virtues of corporate capitalism and "the American way of life" was to erect an impenetrable barrier against Bolshevism. This perception encouraged Wall Street to invest massive sums in the Hollywood studios immediately following the war. The capital of Adolph Zukor's Famous Players–Lasky (soon to become Paramount) alone rose from $10 million to $20 million in two years, and every important studio received large corporate loans from American big business.

Films came to be made according to the most efficient production method American industry had ever devised—the standardized assembly-line technique. As David Robinson puts it,

> The bureaucrats and accountants, eager to overcome the unpredictable and intractable element in the creation of films, began to codify certain principles of commercial production that still prevail in the industry: the attempt to exploit proven success with formula pictures and cycles of any particular genre which temporarily sells, at the expense of other and perhaps unorthodox product; the quest for predictable sales values—star names, best-selling success titles, costly and showy production values—which have little to do with art.

The producer's role as supervisor became enormously important in this process while the director's role declined, and by the time sound was introduced, filmmaking in America had become a fairly conventionalized and predictable operation.

It was to become even more so through the intervention of the Hays Office and the Catholic Church in 1934. The Hollywood scandals of 1921–1922 had alerted many civic-minded people to the power of the movies to influence social attitudes and behavior, and when the first data on movie attendance in the United States were systematically gathered in 1922, it was discovered that some 40 million tickets were sold every week. By the end of the decade, the figure had more than doubled, to 90 million, among whom there were an estimated 40 million minors, including 17 million children under the age of fourteen.

In 1928, William H. Short, executive director of a newly formed "procensorship" body called the Motion Picture Research Council, solicited a large grant ($200,000, or about $1 million in current value) from the Payne Fund, a private philanthropic foundation, to conduct a nationwide study of the influence of motion pictures on children by a group of university psychologists, sociologists, and education specialists. The project's conclusions, published in eleven volumes between 1933 and 1935, were popularly summarized by the journalist Henry James Forman in his 1933 volume *Our Movie Made Children*—a title that came to characterize the whole generation of Americans who grew up during the Depression, came of age in World War II, and became the first national audience for network television in their middle years.

The Payne Fund findings confirmed the worst—movies did seem to bring new ideas to children; did influence interpretations of the world and day-to-day conduct; and did present moral standards, particularly with regard to sexual behavior, different from those of many adults. The media effects that researchers today take for granted, in fact, were shocking new knowledge to an America that had just begun to enter the media age.

Concurrent with these studies, the coming of sound had produced a wave of grim, often violent, screen realism, and yet another public outcry against the "immorality" of Hollywood films. This time, the reaction was organized by the American bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, who set up the Legion of Decency to fight for better and more "moral" motion pictures. In April 1934, with the support of both Protestant and Jewish organizations, the Legion called for a nationwide boycott of movies considered indecent by the Catholic Church. The studios were intimidated into imposing self-censorship before it was too late. In 1927, a Motion Picture Production Code had been drafted by the MPPDA, based on the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls" formula of the immediate postscandal years, and in 1930 the Hays Office had adopted a more formal but still voluntary Code to Maintain Social and Community Values. Now Hays was authorized to create the Production Code Administration (PCA) and to appoint a prominent Catholic layman, Joseph I. Breen, to head it. Under Breen's auspices, Father Daniel A. Lord, a Jesuit priest, and Martin Quigley, a Catholic publisher, coauthored the draconian Production Code, whose provisions would dictate the content of American motion pictures, without exception, for the next twenty years.

The Production Code was awesomely repressive, prohibiting the showing or mentioning of almost everything germane to the situation of normal human adults. It forbade depicting "scenes of passion" in all but the most puerile terms, and it required that the sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home be upheld at all times (married couples, however, were never to be shown sharing a bed). Adultery, illicit sex, seduction, or rape could never be more than suggested, and then only if it was absolutely essential to the plot and severely punished at the end (a favorite means was death from accident or disease). Also prohibited were the use of profanity (a term extended to include "vulgar" expressions such as *cripes*, *guts*, and *nuts*) and racial epithets; any implication of prostitution, miscegenation, sexual aberration, or drug addiction; nudity of all sorts; sexually suggestive dances or costumes; "excessive and lustful kissing"; and excessive drinking. It was forbidden to ridicule or criticize any aspect of any religious faith, to show cruelty to animals or children, or to represent surgical operations, especially childbirth, "in fact or in silhouette."

Yet the code's most labyrinthine strictures were reserved for the depiction of crime. It was forbidden to show the details of a crime; to display machine guns, submachine guns, or other illegal weapons; or to discuss weapons at all in dialogue scenes. It was further required that law-enforcement officers never be shown dying at the hands of criminals and that all criminal activities within a given film were shown to be punished. Under no circumstances could a crime be shown to be justified. Suicide and murder were to be avoided unless absolutely necessary to the plot, and the suggestion of excessive brutality or wholesale slaughter of any kind was absolutely prohibited. From 1934 until the mid-1950s, the code rigidly dictated the content of American films, and in a very real sense kept them from



William Powell and Myrna Loy in *The Thin Man* (W. S. Van Dyke, 1934) are married but in separate beds as mandated by the Production Code.

becoming as serious as they might have, and perhaps should have, been.

Under the administrative provisions, no studio belonging to the MPPDA was to distribute or release any film without a certificate of approval signed by Breen, as director of the PCA, and bearing the PCA's seal. Failure to comply would cause a fine of $25,000 to be levied by the MPPDA against the offending company (the fine was never imposed, but it proved an effective sanction for more than twenty years). The reasons that the moguls were willing not merely to accept, but to institutionalize, what was clearly a system of de facto censorship and prior restraint were several—all of them ultimately related to staying in business.

For one thing, obviously, the economic threat of a boycott during the worst years of the Depression was real, and an industry dependent on pleasing a mass audience several times a week must deliver to that audience what it thinks, at least, the audience wants. For another thing, producers found that they could turn the code to work decisively in favor of more efficient production. By rigidly prescribing and proscribing the kinds of behavior that could be shown or described on the screen, the code could be used as a kind of scriptwriter's blueprint. A love story, for example, could move only in one direction (toward marriage), adultery and crime could have only one conclusion (disease and/or horrible death), dialogue in all situations had well-defined parameters, and so forth. The code, in other words, provided a framework for the construction of screenplays and enabled studios to streamline the creation of filmable continuity scripts.

The Structure of the Studio System

The most significant force shaping the American sound film, however, was economic. In 1928, the studios had greatly increased their debt to Wall Street by borrowing vast sums of capital for the conversion to sound. Wall Street was happy to oblige, because the novelty of sound had nearly doubled weekly admission figures over the previous year. By 1930, a series of mergers and realignments had concentrated 95 percent of all American film production in the hands of eight studios, five "majors" and three "minors." The major studios were organized as vertically integrated corporations, controlling the means not only of production, but of distribution and exhibition as well, through their ownership of film exchanges and theater chains.

Distribution was conducted at a national and an international level: since about 1925, foreign rentals had accounted for half of all American feature revenues and would continue to do so for the next two decades. Exhibition was controlled through the majors' ownership of 2,600 first-run theaters, the 16 percent of the national total that generated 75 percent of the revenue. These studios were, in order of relative economic importance, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Paramount, Warner Bros., 20th Century–Fox, and RKO. The minor studios—which owned no theaters and were dependent on the majors for first-run exhibition outlets—were Universal, Columbia, and United Artists.

Between 1930 and 1945, the Hollywood studios mass-produced some 7,500 feature films, in which every stage of production from conception to exhibition was carefully controlled. These films took their styles and values as much from the studios that made them as from the individual artists involved in their production, so it is important to understand how these studios were composed.

MGM

MGM was the biggest, most prosperous, and most prolific of American studios in the 1930s. At mid-decade, it was producing an average of one feature per week, which, as John Baxter notes, was the largest output of any studio in the history of the cinema. Its parent firm, Loew's Inc., ruled from New York by Nicholas Schenck (1881–1969), provided MGM with a large national exhibition outlet, and its close affiliation with Chase National Bank gave the studio access to nearly unlimited capital.

There was no film so big that MGM couldn't produce it, no talent so large that MGM couldn't buy it. The studio had under contract some of the greatest film talent of the 1930s. MGM was run during this period by its vice president in charge of production, Louis B. Mayer (1885–1957), until his ouster in 1951. He was a ruthless businessman, but the studio's canny young production manager, Irving Thalberg, was able to maintain a consistently high level of achievement in MGM films until his early death in 1936 at the age of thirty seven. Mayer's son-in-law, David O. Selznick (1902–1965), who was hired from RKO to assist Thalberg in 1933, also acquired the reputation of being an artistic producer, and the two men produced some of the most prestigious MGM films of the decade.

The predominant visual style of these films was characterized by **high-key lighting** and opulent production design (the one employed to reveal the other), and their cultural values were the typically American middle-class ones of optimism, materialism, and romantic escapism. MGM's main genres in the 1930s were the melodrama, the musical, and the prestigious literary or theatrical adaptation. Yet the studio's ambience and attitudes during the 1930s are best summed up by its two super-productions of 1939, *The Wizard of Oz* and *Gone with the Wind* (actually a Selznick International production, but released and partly financed by MGM), both nominally directed by Victor Fleming. Neither film has the depth or force of personal artistic vision, but both are opulent, epic, and spectacularly entertaining products of the studio system at its most efficient, spinning beautifully crafted fairy tales for children and adults alike.



Judy Garland in *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939).



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2

[1] Elissa Landi, Joyzelle Joyner, and Frederic March in *The Sign of the Cross* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1932). [2] Frederic March, Miriam Hopkins, and Gary Cooper in *Design for Living* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1933).

Paramount

If MGM was the most "American" of the American studios, Paramount was the most "European." Many of Paramount's directors, craftsmen, and technicians had come to it directly from Germany via the Parufamet Agreement of 1926, and the UFA influence on Paramount style was substantial. For this reason, Paramount made the most sophisticated and visually ornate films of the 1930s. The studio's German art director, Hans Dreier, and its German cinematographer, Theodor Sparkuhl (1891–1945), as well as his American colleagues Victor Milner (1893–1972) and Karl Struss (1891–1981), created for its films a baroque pictorial style that was counterpointed by their subtle content. The studio was controlled during the 1930s (and for some twenty years thereafter) by its founder, Adolph Zukor, and after 1936, by its president, Barney Balaban (1887–1971). Through its formation of the 1,200-house Publix theater chain in 1925–1926, Paramount owned the largest motion-picture circuit in the world; this forced the company into receivership during the worst years of the Depression but brought it record profits in the 1940s, when World War II drove public demand for movie entertainment to an all-time high. Lacking MGM's Depression-era financial stability, Paramount nevertheless made almost as many films. And, because it was less tightly organized at the level of production than its rivals, these films often bore the personal imprint of their directors more than the standard 1930s studio product.

Cecil B. DeMille continued to turn out the lavish sex-and-violence-soaked spectacles that had made him the star talent of Famous Players–Lasky in the silent era. At the other extreme were the films of the urbane Ernst Lubitsch, innovator of the UFA *Kostümfilm* and the silent comedy of manners, who had come to America in 1922 and stayed on to become Paramount's most prestigious director of the 1930s. (He was also in charge of production from 1935 to 1936—the only director ever to be given complete creative authority over the output of a major studio.)

Warner Bros.

In the cultural hierarchy of American studios in the 1930s, Warner Bros. fell below the sophisticated Paramount and the respectably middle-class MGM. It was in fact the studio of the working class, specializing in low-life melodramas and musicals with a Depression setting during the entire decade. Conditioned by its origins as a minor studio, Warner Bros. imposed a strict code of production efficiency on its directors, technicians, and stars alike. Directors were expected to produce at least five features a year. Actors and actresses were hired at low salaries and held to them long after they had become stars. Sometimes, when a film was being prepared for distribution, Warners' editors were required to cut single frames from every shot simply to tighten the film's structure and increase its speed. Finally, Warners' cinematographers, Hal Mohr, Ernest Haller, Tony Gaudio, and Sol Polito, were required to adopt a style of flat, low-key lighting in order to obscure the spareness of the studio's economical sets.

This emphasis on maximum economy of means, enforced by executives such as Hal B. Wallis (1899–1986), Henry Blanke (1901–1981), and the ruthlessly pragmatic Jack L. Warner (1892–1978), produced a group of films that were models of fast-paced, disciplined narrative construction. Warners in the 1930s was preeminently the home of the gangster cycle and the Busby Berkeley backstage musical, but it also undertook some major works of social realism, as well as a series of prestigious biographical films directed by the former UFA actor William Dieterle (1893–1972).

Other top directors at Warners in the 1930s were Michael Curtiz, the Hungarian filmmaker who had worked for UFA in the 1920s, and Mervyn LeRoy (1900–1987). Given the studio's rigid organization and tight production schedule, neither Dieterle, Curtiz, nor LeRoy was able to pursue a personal vision in his Warners films, but all three proved themselves to be remarkably versatile professional filmmakers who could function as master craftsmen within a system that militated strongly against creative freedom. Warners was also distinguished in the 1930s for its art directors, Anton Grot and Robert Haas, and its two great composers, Erich Wolfgang Korngold and Max Steiner, both of whom joined the studio in 1935.

20th Century–Fox

20th Century–Fox was born of financial difficulties, yet it would become, after MGM and Paramount, the most profitable studio of its era. In March 1935, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against William Fox in his all-or-nothing attempt to retain complete control of the U.S. patent rights to the Tri-Ergon sound-on-film process, and he was ousted as president of Fox Film Corporation by Sidney Kent, who arranged a merger with Joseph M. Schenck's Twentieth Century Pictures in late 1935, forming 20th Century–Fox and securing Twentieth Century executive producer Darryl F. Zanuck (1902–1979) as the new company's vice president in charge of production.



Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman in *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942).

Zanuck, who reigned as production chief through 1956, replaced Fox's lieutenant Winfield Sheehan (1883–1945). Despite William Fox's depredations, 20th Century–Fox was heir to the Movietone City complex in Los Angeles and newsreel studios in New York; extensive theater chains in the United States (National Theatre), England (Gaumont-British Pictures), Australia (the Hoyts Circuit), New Zealand, and South Africa; and 147 film exchanges serving every country on earth but the Soviet Union.

The studio's films of the 1930s acquired a reputation for hard, glossy surfaces produced through careful budgeting and production control. Fox's chief director at this time was John Ford, although he also worked sporadically for other studios. Fox also specialized in such popular B-film series as the Charlie Chan mysteries, but its fortunes in the 1930s were built in large part on the films of its popular child star Shirley Temple. The studio's primary cinematographers were Bert Glennon and Arthur Miller, and its music director was the brilliant arranger Alfred Newman. Finally, Fox was noted for having the best special-effects department of all the major studios, as well as for producing the most Technicolor features through 1949.



Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and Shirley Temple in *The Little Colonel* (David Butler, 1935).

RKO

The smallest of the majors was RKO. It remained financially unstable during the 1930s and the 1940s, and in 1955, was sold to General Teleradio Inc., a subsidiary of the General Tire and Rubber Company, which wanted access to its film library for broadcast use. RKO was ruled by eight successive regimes from 1929 to 1952 (the last being that of millionaire Howard Hughes [1905–1976], who is credited with wrecking it), and it was the most volatile and risk-taking of all studios of the era. The 1930s, however, was RKO's most stable decade—probably because the corporation was in receivership from 1933 to 1939 and placed under the administration of a federal district court. In 1934, RKO became the home of the Fred Astaire–Ginger Rogers musical with the success of their first film together, *Flying Down to Rio* (Thornton C. Freeland, 1933), in which they had second billing.

From 1934 to 1939, the studio made eight Astaire-Rogers vehicles under the auspices of its innovative young producer Pandro S. Berman (1905–1996) and star directors such as Mark Sandrich (1900–1945) and George Stevens (1904–1975). Astaire-Rogers films were among the most popular box-office attractions in 1930s America and gave RKO a reputation for stylishness and sophistication during the entire decade, although it produced its share of B-films for the second half of double bills.

RKO's most extraordinary production of the decade and one of its most successful was the monster thriller *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933), whose brilliant stop-motion photography and special effects by Willis O'Brien (1886–1962) are still a marvel of technical achievement.

The studio's most important star during this period was Katharine Hepburn (1907–2003), who made fourteen films for RKO between 1932 and 1938, including the classic screwball comedy *Bringing Up Baby* (Howard Hawks, 1938). RKO's art director from 1930 to 1943 was the distinguished Van Nest Polglase



Fay Wray in the hairy paw in *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933).

(1898–1968). In addition to its own films, RKO also released independent productions for Samuel Goldwyn and David O. Selznick, and it became the distributor for Walt Disney's animated features and shorts with the release of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the first American animated feature, during Christmas week 1937. The studio ended the decade with bravado by signing the enfant terrible of broadcasting, Orson Welles, to a highly publicized six-film contract in 1939.

The Minors

Universal Pictures, which remained under the control of its founder, Carl Laemmle, until 1936, had been a leading studio in the 1920s, producing for such talents as Erich von Stroheim, Lon Chaney, and Rudolph Valentino, but by the 1930s the company had slipped into a minor position. Unlike the Big Five, it had failed to acquire a chain of downtown first-run theaters and was forced to concentrate its production and distribution efforts on subsequent-run houses in suburban and rural areas. It produced a number of prestigious films during the decade, including Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), and it achieved some commercial success with the popular melodramas of John M. Stahl (1886–1950), but its standard product was the low-budget feature designed for double bills. Nevertheless, Universal did manage to distinguish itself in the horror-fantasy genre during the 1930s, drawing on the UFA tradition of Expressionism and the talents of the directors James Whale (1889–1957) and Tod Browning (1882–1962), as well as the former UFA cameraman Karl Freund.

Tod Browning's *Dracula*, broodingly photographed by Freund, began the Universal horror cycle in 1931, and it was continued by James Whale's powerful and chilling version of *Frankenstein* in the same year. Whale, an Englishman of great sophistication with a fine feeling for Gothic atmosphere, became Universal's star director of the 1930s on the basis of his elegantly mounted horror films. A second cycle was begun at Universal in 1939 with *Son of Frankenstein*, stylishly directed by Rowland V. Lee, but the films of the second cycle quickly lapsed into imitation and self-parody by the early 1940s.

Columbia Pictures was the brainchild of a single man, Harry Cohn (1891–1958), who founded the corporation in 1924 with his brother Jack (1889–1956) and Joe Brandt (all three former employees of Carl Laemmle), and who ruled over it absolutely from 1932 until his death. Columbia owned no theater circuits but maintained a successful international distribution network under the management of Jack Cohn, which enabled it to sustain continuous profits during the Depression and finally to double its assets during the postwar boom.

Columbia's staple product during the studio era consisted of low-budget Westerns and long-run series films adapted from other media (e.g., the twenty-eight-film Blondie series [1938–1951] based on the Chic Young comic strip). Yet Cohn had a policy of hiring, for single pictures, stars who were temporarily disaffected from their regular studios, and he managed to produce a number of first-class films at low overhead in this manner. The studio's star director was Frank Capra (1897–1991), whose New Deal and screwball comedies written by Robert Riskin (1897–1955) were largely responsible for keeping Columbia solvent during the 1930s. Through its Screen Gems division (established in 1952), Columbia became the first Hollywood studio to produce programming for the new medium of television.

United Artists was not, strictly speaking, a studio at all but a distributor for the films of independent producers. It had been founded by Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, and D. W. Griffith in 1919 to distribute their own films, and in the 1930s, it handled the independent productions of Samuel Goldwyn, David O. Selznick, Walter Wanger, Hal Roach, and the Hungarian-born British producer-director Alexander Korda, among others. United Artists was unique in that it owned no production facilities and no

(right) Bela Lugosi in *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1931).



exhibition chains, so production and distribution of its films were negotiated on an individual basis.

Because United Artists (UA) had no studio and no stars, it did not fare well financially during this period of Hollywood's massive corporate growth, but by the same token, the absence of huge overhead costs enabled it to survive, if not always to prosper, during hard times. During the studio era, UA relied on the Big Five for access to first-run theaters. This was generally not a problem during the reign of board chairman (1924–1935) and president (from 1926) Joseph M. Schenck, because his brother Nicholas was concurrently president of Loew's Inc. and helped him negotiate bookings with the majors, including, of course, MGM. Yet when Joseph left to head up the newly formed 20th Century–Fox in 1935, UA was left without an ally among the Big Five, and its fortunes declined rapidly as producers turned away from it one by one. It was revitalized after 1951, however, when it was acquired by the entertainment lawyers Arthur B. Krim and Robert S. Benjamin, and after absorbing the B-film studio Eagle-Lion, UA produced a string of major hits, including *The African Queen* (1951) and *High Noon* (1952).

The studio system of production could exist only as long as the majors maintained their monopolistic control of the means of exhibition. Without a guaranteed weekly audience, films would have to be made and sold on terms other than those the system allowed. In July 1938, in *The United States v. Paramount Pictures*, the federal government began litigation against the five major studios for combining and conspiring to restrain trade unreasonably and to monopolize the production, distribution, and exhibition of motion pictures. The three minors were charged with combining and conspiring with the majors for the same purpose.

When war seemed imminent in 1940, a consent decree was issued, permitting the studios to retain their exhibition chains, with minor restrictions, but the case was reactivated in 1945 and concluded in May 1948, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the vertical integration of the majors violated federal antitrust laws and ordered the five companies to divest themselves of their theaters during a five-year period. The divestiture order, known as the "Paramount decrees" or "consent decrees," destroyed the studio system by eliminating the guaranteed distribution and guaranteed weekly audience, which were its mainstay. (The Big Five actually owned only 16 percent of the nation's theaters, but that 16 percent comprised more than 70 percent of the first-run houses in the ninety-two largest cities, which guaranteed that the majors would capture 75 percent of all box-office revenue during the studio era, with another 20 percent going to the minors.)

"Poverty Row"

Below even the minor studios were the "B-studios." These came into existence in the 1930s as the result of a uniquely American movie phenomenon: the double bill. When the novelty of sound had worn off and the Depression had set in, audiences began to stay away from the movies. From 90 million admissions a week in 1930, the figure dropped to 60 million by 1932. By the midsummer of 1935, 5,000 of the 16,000 movie theaters in the United States were closed. To combat this situation, Hollywood invented the double bill, which offered two features, a cartoon, and a newsreel for the price of a single admission. By 1935, 85 percent of all American theaters were offering double bills, and from 1935 to around 1950, American audiences expected three-hours-plus worth of entertainment every time they went to the movies.

The B-studios were created by the rental system that the major studios devised for double features. Whereas the producer/distributor and the exhibitor would split the box-office receipts for the main feature, or the A-film (usually 60/40 or 80/20), the **B-film** was rented to the exhibitor at a flat rate. This meant that there was very little financial risk involved in producing B-films (since distribution was guaranteed), but also that there was very little profit in it because the film would never make more money than the fixed rate allowed. For this reason, the major studios initially had scant interest in producing B-features (although the minors produced them in quantity, and the Big Five started operating B-units around 1935), so in the early 1930s, about a dozen small companies sprang up in Hollywood for the specific purpose of producing cheap, hour-long genre films for the bottom half of double bills.

Collectively known as "the B-Hive," or "Poverty Row," these studios operated on an extremely thin profit margin with very little capital. One B-feature might cost $75,000 to $80,000 to produce and make a profit of $10,000 to $15,000 nationwide, but the average budget and profit figures were $20,000 and $3,000 to $4,000, respectively. Shooting schedules ranged from seven to fourteen days, depending on the material, and were rigidly followed, because keeping a cast and a crew on tap for a single day beyond the scheduled completion date would often destroy the small profit margin.

The most important B-studios were Republic Pictures, Monogram Productions, and Grand Natio vvnal Films, and in the 1940s, Producers Releasing



John Wayne in Monument Valley in *Rio Grande* (John Ford, 1950).

Corporation (PRC) and Eagle-Lion Films. At their peak, each studio produced forty to fifty films per year, much of which was trash. The B-studios also provided the training ground for many directors who went on to better things—for example, in the 1930s, Christy Cabanne, Richard Thorpe, and Charles Vidor; and in the 1940s, Edward Dmytryk, Laslo Benedek, Anthony Mann, Budd Boetticher, Ida Lupino, Jacques Tourneur, and Phil Karlson—and produced a number of extraordinary films in their own right.

During the postwar boom, Herbert J. Yates's Republic even became successful enough to produce such A-films as Frank Borzage's *Moonrise* (1948), Lewis Milestone's *The Red Pony* (1949), Fritz Lang's *House by the River* (1950), and Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* (1954), and to distribute John Ford's Argossy productions, *Rio Grande* (1950), *The Quiet Man* (1952), and *The Sun Shines Bright* (1953), although this extravagance eventually contributed to its bankruptcy in 1958.

When the major studios were divested of their theater chains between 1948 and 1953, the double bill was no longer profitable. The B-studios folded, and the B-film found a new home in the form of the television series. Only Monogram survived, in the form of Allied Artists (incorporated in 1952).

Ethnic Cinema

Another source of independently produced, low-budget films during the 1930s was ethnic cinema—movies aimed at a small but specific market category as distinguished by race or religion, usually featuring all-ethnic casts. Like the B's of Poverty Row, ethnic films were shot quickly and cheaply, but they often lacked the technical competence associated with even the most lowly studio environment. In its sometimes bizarrely nonclassical construction, composed of inferior lighting, sound recording, and



Lucia Lunn Moses in *Scar of Shame* (Frank Peregini, 1927).

editing—as well as poor scripting and acting—ethnic cinema can be understood as an alternative mode of film practice, but it was also movie making on a shoestring for audiences too marginalized to demand more.

The largest component in this subcategory was black cinema, often called "race cinema," which had begun during the 1910s in response to the outrageous stereotyping of African Americans in mainstream cinema, most prominently in D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). By 1918, eight independent companies had produced race movies with all-black casts, and in the next three decades more than 150 companies would be created for the same purpose. Two such companies were the Lincoln Motion Picture Company, which was founded by the brothers George and Noble Johnson in Los Angeles in 1916 to produce two-reelers such as *The Realization of a Negro's Ambition* (1916); and the Colored Players Corporation of Philadelphia, which produced several influential features during the 1920s, including the legendary *Scar of Shame* (1927), a melodrama focused on the class and color caste system of the black middle class.

The most consistent all-black production companies of the 1920s and the 1930s were those owned and operated by Oscar Micheaux (1884–1951), the black film pioneer who, between 1918 and 1948, produced, directed, edited, and distributed (often personally, striking his own deals with exhibitors) about forty feature films to African American audiences across the nation. Only ten of these—one silent (*Body and Soul*, 1925; starring Paul Robeson) and nine sound films—have survived, but all had racial themes and some treated provocative subjects such as lynching (*Within Our Gates*, 1920), the Ku Klux Klan (*The Symbol of the Unconquered*, 1920), "passing for white" (*Deceit*, 1923), separatism versus assimilation (*Birthright*, 1924; remade in 1938), and interracial marriage (*Veiled Aristocrats*, 1932). Conversely, many of Micheaux's films were frankly exploitative action and crime films, and all were made with scant attention to Hollywood's stylistic norms. Scenes were shot unrehearsed on location (often business offices or Harlem nightclubs hooked for the free publicity) in single takes and used regardless of quality; narrative gaps were padded with canned cabaret routines and outtakes.

Micheaux's early sound films are so clumsy that in one of them (*The Girl from Chicago*, 1932), his voice can be heard on the sound track directing the actors. Yet Micheaux, whose own budgets rarely exceeded $15,000, had been formative in the development of a race-film market that, by the coming of sound, extended to more than 600 theaters and had begun to attract the attention of the major studios. Furthermore, even though his own output comprised only fifteen of about seventy-five independent black features produced during the 1930s, Micheaux decisively influenced several generations of African American filmmakers, a fact acknowledged by the Directors Guild of America when it gave him its Fiftieth Anniversary "Golden Jubilee Award" in 1986.

Hollywood's attempt to co-opt the race-film market with all-black musicals such as MGM's *Hallelujah!* and Fox's *Hearts in Dixie* (both 1929), and such later black-cast productions as United Artists' *The Emperor Jones* (1933) and Warners' *The Green Pastures* (1936), fizzled, leaving the field to Micheaux and a number of mixed-race independents, of which Ralph Cooper's all-black Million Dollar Pictures and Richard Kahn's Hollywood Productions were the most financially successful. Both had access to Poverty Row studio facilities and distribution channels, and together with International Road Shows and Harlem-based Paragon Pictures, they specialized in making black versions of popular studio genre films. Many of these films were written by Spencer Williams (1893–1969), a unique director/actor/writer best remembered today for his role as Andy in the *Amos 'n' Andy* television series of 1951–1953.

During the 1940s, Williams teamed with Jewish entrepreneur Alfred Sack of Sack Amusement Enterprises, Dallas, to produce a series of nine all-black features from his own screenplays, which included religious films, dramas, and comedies. As black films grew closer to mainstream Hollywood product in both content and

(right) Paul Robeson in *The Emperor Jones* (Dudley Murphy, 1933).



form by the early 1940s, the concept of the race film as an entirely separate mode began to disappear, preparing the way for post–World War II black independent production on a scale previously inconceivable.

A second important type of ethnic filmmaking during the 1930s was Yiddish cinema. Beginning in tsarist Russia as an offshoot of Yiddish theater, Yiddish film came to America on the eve of World War I, with the New York Yiddish stage providing much of its material. (Yiddish is a Germanic language with heavy borrowings from Hebrew and Slavic that is written in Hebrew characters; as the vernacular of Eastern European Jewish communities before World War II and emigrant communities all over the world, it was once spoken by 12 million people.) After the war, Yiddish cinema was carried forward by sporadic production in the newly created states of Poland, Austria, and the Soviet Union, adapting the work of Jewish novelists such as Sholom Aleichem and Isaac Babel. All of these films were silent with Yiddish-language intertitles, but the coming of sound created a boom that resulted in the production of nearly three hundred Yiddish films worldwide during the next decade, about fifty of them in the United States.

The first Yiddish talkie, *Ad Mosay* (*Until When*; released as *The Eternal Prayer*, 1929), was directed by Sidney M. Goldin (1880–1937), known as the "grandfather of Yiddish cinema." The "father" of Yiddish cinema would have to be Joseph Seiden, the owner of New York's first sound-equipment rental company, who brought Goldin together with several theater owners to form Judea Pictures Corporation in late 1929. Judea's first features, *Mayn Yiddishe Mame* (*My Jewish Mama*) and *Eybike Naronim* (*Eternal Fools*), both directed by Goldin in 1930, were followed by a series of shorts featuring the best-known choirs and cantors of the day (the "cantorial short" became a popular form of early Yiddish sound film) and a compilation of such material titled *The Voice of Israel* (1931). Another popular form was the Yiddish compilation film, which combined footage from silent foreign features with Yiddish sound narration.



Molly Picon (third from left) in *Yidl mitn Fidl* (*Yiddle with His Fiddle*; Joseph Green and Jan Nowina-Przybylski, 1936).

To varying degrees, American Yiddish talkies were characterized by the same poor direction and technical ineptitude that afflicted race films—and for the same reasons. In 1936, however, the Polish-born producer Joseph Green went to Warsaw with the express purpose of making high-quality films for the Yiddish market. There he co-directed four films that became nodal points for the so-called Golden Age of Yiddish Cinema, 1936–1940. Rich in Jewish theater, art, and culture, Poland was the ideal context for this revival, which produced many excellent films and several international hits, including Green's own *Yidl mitn Fidl* (*Yiddle with His Fiddle*; co-directed with Jan Nowina-Przybylski, 1936), *Dir Dibek* (*The Dybbuk*; Michal Waszynski, 1937), and *A brivele der mamen* (*A Letter to Mama*; Joseph Green and Leon Trystan, 1938).

Yiddish cinema in Poland reached its apex in the eighteen months before the Nazi invasion of September 1939, during which time fully eight of the twenty-three Yiddish films that opened in New York had been made in Warsaw. Influenced by the success of Joseph Green's Polish films, producer Roman Rebush brought the Golden Age to America by adapting Peretz Hirschbein's classic Yiddish play of life in the *shtetl* (Jewish ghetto), *Grine Felder* (*Green Fields*, 1937). Under the direction of Hollywood veteran Edgar G. Ulmer, *Green Fields* became a commercial hit not only with Yiddish-speaking audiences, but with the public at large (like many Yiddish films, it was subtitled in English). The Yiddish "quality" cycle ended around 1940. Joseph Seiden continued to produce low-budget Yiddish movies for the next two years, and a handful of Yiddish films were made in the postwar era, but the audience for Yiddish cinema by then had largely vanished—in the United States through assimilation and in Europe through the Holocaust.

Major Figures of the Studio Era

The period 1930 to 1939 saw the production of some five thousand feature films in the United States and was, in many ways, a Golden Age for American cinema. Despite the rigors and impersonality of the Hollywood production system, at least four directors working in America in the 1930s emerged as major figures of the sound film. They were Josef von Sternberg, John Ford, Howard Hawks, and Alfred Hitchcock.

Josef von Sternberg

Born Jonas Stern in Vienna, Josef von Sternberg (1894–1969) began his career in the United States during World War I as a maker of training and indoctrination films for the Army Signal Corps. He spent his apprenticeship as a technical assistant, a scenarist, and a cameraman for a variety of filmmakers in America and England before directing his first film in 1925, the independently produced *The Salvation Hunters*. In 1927, von Sternberg went to work for Paramount, where he made *Underworld* (1927), which is generally considered to be the first modern gangster film, although its realism was tempered by the lush visual poetry that would soon become a von Sternberg trademark.

Von Sternberg turned to *Kammerspielfilm* with *The Docks of New York*. This brooding tale of an encounter between a ship's stoker and a prostitute along the New York waterfront is renowned as a masterpiece of pictorial composition. The film was produced entirely in the studio, and its visually complex mise-en-scène creates a dreamlike atmosphere, reminiscent of Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* (1919), which was resurrected a decade later in Marcel Carné and Jacques Prévert's *Le quai des brumes* (*Port of Shadows*, 1938).

Von Sternberg made the transition to sound with the realistic gangster/prison drama *Thunderbolt* in 1929, and in that year he was summoned to Germany by Erich Pommer to direct, for UFA, Emil Jannings's first talking picture, a version of Heinrich Mann's novel *Professor Unrat* (1905); it became the first real classic of the sound film, *Der blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*, 1930). Adapted from the novel, *Der blaue Engel* is a powerful film on the theme of sexual domination, in which a middle-aged bourgeois teacher, played by Jannings, becomes enslaved to a sensual cabaret singer named Lola-Lola. The singer was played by Marlene Dietrich, a stage and film actress under contract to UFA whom von Sternberg chose for the part and subsequently brought to stardom in America. *Der blaue Engel* is striking for its creative use of sound, but it is also the film in which von Sternberg first began his career-long struggle with the problem of "dead space," that is, the space that separates the camera from its subject and the subject from its background. (Initially, as in *Der blaue Engel*, he attempted to occupy this space with a variety of streamers, nets, posters, veils, and even cardboard cutouts hanging from the ceiling above the stage, but in his later films he realized that only by thickening the air with camera filters, diffusers, and gauzes could he achieve the gradations of light necessary to fill the screen as he wished.)



Emil Jannings and Marlene Dietrich in *Der blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*; Josef von Sternberg, 1930).

In 1930, von Sternberg returned with Dietrich to the United States to begin the series of six films for Paramount that were to make her one of Hollywood's most glamorous and sought-after stars and simultaneously to wreck his career. The first of these was the successful *Morocco* (1930), the story of a romance between a European cabaret singer and a foreign legionnaire in Mogador, North Africa, written by Jules Furthman (1888–1966). Photographed by Lee Garmes and designed by Hans Dreier, *Morocco* presents Dietrich in all of her seductive, androgynous charm and was one of the most innovative of early American sound films. By this time, von Sternberg's reputation had grown so formidable that his name was appearing on theater marquees with the titles of his films—a rare practice in the United States at that time—and he was frequently ranked with Eisenstein as one of the foremost directors of the era.

With *Shanghai Express* (1932), which is among the most visually evocative films the director ever made, von Sternberg entered his richest period of creativity. The film concerns the interactions of a group of passengers on an express train running from Peking to Shanghai that is hijacked by a rebellious warlord, and it focuses on a glamorous prostitute, Shanghai Lily (Dietrich), and her former lover, a glacial British army officer played by Clive Brook. Essentially a melodrama of deception and desire, *Shanghai Express* is a film in which decor becomes a theme in itself. From the hypnotic chiaroscuro photography of Lee Garmes, the



Marlene Dietrich in *Shanghai Express* (Josef von Sternberg, 1932).

incredibly exotic costumes of Travis Banton, and the lavish production design of Hans Dreier, von Sternberg created a mythological China where "dead space" is virtually absent. The tour-de-force opening sequence in which the train leaves the chaotic, flag-draped Peking station, the poetic encounters between Dietrich and Brook on the observation deck of the express, and the long lateral tracking shots down the latticed corridors of the cars themselves—all constructed in the studio—achieve a visual saturation rare outside of German Expressionism and the later work of Eisenstein.

Von Sternberg's next Dietrich vehicle was the bizarre *Blonde Venus* (1932), another stylistically striking film with a weak narrative concerning the broken life of yet another beautiful cabaret singer. Then followed a fantastic and beautiful film "based on episodes from the private diaries of Catherine the Great," *The Scarlet Empress* (1934). This film apotheosized Dietrich as the ultimate symbol of sexual domination and degradation. The operatic grandeur and massive scale of the film are thought to have influenced Eisenstein's stylized design for *Ivan the Terrible, Parts I* (1945) and *II* (1946). Enormously expensive to produce, *The Scarlet Empress* failed at the box office, and its director's favored status at Paramount was abruptly cut short. Von Sternberg's final film with Dietrich for the studio and the one that virtually ended his career was *The Devil Is a Woman* (1935), the only film for which von Sternberg took credit for cinematography (with Lucien Ballard), although he had supervised the photography and the lighting of all his other films. In it, he achieved the ultimate in his attempt to make the two-dimensional cinema frame three-dimensional by filling dead space with decor and subtle gradations of light.

The British documentarist John Grierson objected to one of von Sternberg's more visually extravagant productions by remarking in a contemporary review, "When a director dies, he becomes a photographer." (Von Sternberg was, in fact, a photographer, having begun as a cameraman and having maintained his membership in the prestigious American Society of Cinematographers during his entire career.) Von Sternberg would have considered this a compliment because, for him, the image was the only true medium of cinematic art. Strongly influenced by graphic art, his greatest films constituted a kind of painting with light.

In fact, he had little but contempt for the American tradition of narrative film as exemplified by the work of Griffith, Ince, and DeMille. Von Sternberg's great achievement was to create *within* American narrative cinema, a cinema of mood and atmosphere based on European styles of camera composition and lighting and his own eccentric vision of human passion and desire. It was a cinema of exoticism, eroticism, and ultimately, cultural decadence, but one of astounding sensuous beauty that is unique in the history of film and modern art.

John Ford

Like von Sternberg, John Ford (b. Sean Aloysius O'Feeney, 1895–1973) began his career in the silent film, but beyond that similarity it would be difficult to imagine two more different directors. Whereas von Sternberg had contempt for American narrative cinema and for American values, Ford was a staunch proponent of both. Whereas von Sternberg contributed to cinema a handful of exotic and eccentric masterworks between 1927 and 1935, Ford directed more than 125 films, most of them popular and commercial products of the studio system, in a career that extended from 1917 to 1970.

John Ford first came to Hollywood in 1914 to work as a prop man for his older brother, Francis (1881–1953), a **contract director** at Universal. From 1917 to 1921, as Jack Ford, he was employed by Universal as a director

of low-budget Westerns. In 1922, he went to work for Fox, winning fame as a stylist with *The Iron Horse* (1924), a feature-length epic on the building of the first transcontinental railroad that became a smash hit, and a sweeping drama of the Dakota land rush titled *Three Bad Men* (1926), which did not. In 1927, deeply impressed by the Fox-produced *Sunrise*, Ford fell under the influence of F. W. Murnau and made a series of films—*Mother Machree*, *Four Sons*, *Hangman's House* (all 1928)—replete with expressive decor, stylized lighting effects, and elaborate moving camera shots in imitation of the German director.

Ford's first major sound film was the lost *Men without Women* (1930), a submarine drama in which one man must die to save the rest of the crew. For this film, Ford used a real submarine and submerged his camera underwater in a glass box, among other innovative techniques. It also marked the beginning of Ford's long and fruitful collaboration with the scenarist Dudley Nichols and the cameraman Joseph August (1890–1947) on many a successful project. Yet he was not regarded as a major figure until *The Informer*, his first great critical success, cheaply and quickly produced for RKO in 1935. Adapted by Nichols from the 1925 novel by Liam O'Flaherty and ingeniously, if frugally, designed by Van Nest Polglase, it tells the symbol-laden story of an ignorant hulk of a man who betrays a fellow member of the Irish Republican Army to the British for money during the Irish Rebellion of 1922 and is psychologically tormented by his act until the IRA finally kills him in retribution. The film was photographed by Joseph August in a brooding manner reminiscent of classical German Expressionism and the *Kammerspielfilm*, and much use was made of subjective camera techniques to portray the informer's tortured state of mind, as when a crumpled "wanted" poster for the friend he has betrayed appears to pursue him down a foggy Dublin street like his own guilty conscience.



John Wayne in *Stagecoach* (John Ford, 1939).

The year 1939, however, witnessed the release of three of Ford's finest films. In *Stagecoach*, produced by Walter Wanger for UA, Ford returned to the Western for the first time in thirteen years and produced a film that was to revitalize the genre, largely in his own hands, for another twenty. Written by Dudley Nichols and photographed by Bert Glennon, this tale of a dangerous coach ride through hostile Indian territory by a group of misfits from every level of frontier society embodies what was to become a classical Fordian theme—the convolutions of human character under the pressure of extreme stress. Its stark and awesome setting in Monument Valley, Arizona—a location to which Ford would return time and time again—creates a symbolic landscape of the individual alone in an alien environment. The film was a great popular and critical success, receiving awards from both the New York Film Critics Circle and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (it also made John Wayne [1907–1979] a star).

At Fox again, Ford made *Young Mr. Lincoln*, a somber rendition of an original screenplay by Lamar Trotti, and succeeded in raising the story of Lincoln's early career as a small-town lawyer to the level of national myth. Ford's final film of 1939, *Drums along the Mohawk*, dealt with yet another aspect of the American past. His first work in color, the film is a visually striking re-creation of the American revolutionary era in New York that was shot on location in the forests of Utah's Wasatch Mountain.

Ford's new burst of creative energy continued into the 1940s with *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), perhaps the most important Hollywood film of the Depression era. Adapted by Nunnally Johnson (1897–1977) from the John Steinbeck novel, it concerns a family of dispossessed farmers migrating to California across the dust bowl of the Southwest during the Depression. It was notable for the stark documentary texture of its exteriors, achieved through the beautifully restrained camerawork

of the cinematographer Gregg Toland. Ford's last commercial film before World War II was *How Green Was My Valley* (1941), adapted from the novel by Richard Llewellyn. This romantic and nostalgic film, for which an elaborate Welsh village was constructed on the 20th Century–Fox back lot, deals with the disintegration of a Welsh mining family and the communal society in which it lives at the turn of the century; in the year of *Citizen Kane*, it won five Academy Awards.

During the war, Ford joined the navy and made documentaries for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), including the famous *Battle of Midway* (1942, theatrically released by Fox), which he photographed himself from a water tower during the Japanese air attack, winning the Purple Heart (he was wounded in his left arm) and an Academy Award for Best Documentary in the process. Ford's first postwar film, *They Were Expendable* (1945) for MGM, was a moving tribute to the unstinting courage and discipline of the men with whom he had served. Exquisitely photographed by Joseph August, it tells the story of the sailors who pioneered the use of the PT boat during the American evacuation of the Philippines, and it is one of Ford's most intensely personal films.

His next film, *My Darling Clementine* (1946) for Fox, concerns the events leading up to the legendary gunfight between the Earp brothers, assisted by Doc Holliday, and the Clanton family at the OK Corral in Tombstone, Arizona. It contains scenes of frontier communal life, such as the lyrical dedication ceremony of Tombstone's first church, that are among Ford's most visually poetic creations.

In March 1946, like several other major Hollywood directors, including Frank Capra (Liberty Films, 1945–1947), Fritz Lang (Diana Productions, 1945–1947), Alfred Hitchcock (Transatlantic Pictures, 1946–1948), and Howard Hawks (Monterey Productions, 1946–1947), Ford formed his own production company, Argossy Pictures Corporation, with producer Merian C. Cooper. Its first film was the final Ford-Nichols collaboration: a version of Graham Greene's 1940 novel *The Power and the Glory*, titled *The Fugitive* (1947). It was co-produced by the distinguished Mexican director Emilio Fernández (1904–1986) and photographed by his cameraman Gabriel Figueroa (1907–1997). In both theme and technique it was reminiscent of *The Informer*. Like its predecessor, *The Fugitive* lost money, and Ford shot a series of brilliantly mythic Westerns on location in Monument Valley to recoup his losses, including the so-called Cavalry trilogy—*Fort Apache* (1948), which inaugurated Ford's long association with screenwriter Frank S. Nugent; *She*



Henry Fonda as Wyatt Earp in *My Darling Clementine* (John Ford, 1946).



(left) The Welsh mining village in *How Green Was My Valley* (John Ford, 1941).

Wore a Yellow Ribbon (1949); and *Rio Grande* (1950)—and *Wagon Master* (1950). These, together with his final Argossy films—*The Quiet Man* (1952), a nostalgic paean to Irish village life shot on location at the Feeney family homestead in Connemara, and *The Sun Shines Bright* (1953), a picaresque remake of *Judge Priest*, which was the director's favorite film—stand today among Ford's finest achievements.

After Argossy was dissolved, Ford returned to working for the studios and produced some extraordinary films—the African adventure *Mogambo* (1953) for MGM, a remake of Victor Fleming's *Red Dust* (1932); *The Long Gray Line* (1955) for Columbia, a biography of West Point athletic trainer Marty Maher and Ford's first film in CinemaScope; and preeminently, the epic questing/captivity narrative *The Searchers* (1956) for Warners, widely regarded today as one of the greatest Westerns ever made. Ford's last work, his most magnificent, approaches the sublime. This could certainly be argued of the elegiac, meditative Westerns *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* (1962) and *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964).

Sometimes racist (the Indians in his Westerns are either bloodthirsty devils or noble savages, but always, with the notable exception of *Cheyenne Autumn*, formidable opponents), frequently sentimental, and always culturally conservative, John Ford was nevertheless a great American director. His accommodation with the studio system did not prevent him from making films of incredible technical virtuosity and strong personal vision that are admired for their classicism all over the world.

In his Westerns, he created a coherent mythology of the American past that brings him close to Griffith—for both men, in fact, history was the embodiment of moral, rather than empirical, truth, and their visions of the past do not often conform to fact. Historical inaccuracy notwithstanding, all of Ford's major films sustain a worldview based on his admiration for the traditional values of community life—for honor, loyalty, discipline, and finally, courage—and it is a worldview as consistent and compelling as any the cinema has to offer.

Howard Hawks

Another important director who dealt with typically American themes was Howard Hawks (1896–1977). Less a stylist than either von Sternberg or Ford, Hawks characteristically concerned himself with the construction of tough, functional narratives that embodied his personal ethic of professionalism, quiet courage, and self-respect. He directed forty-three features, contributing major films to every popular American genre, during a career that spanned nearly half a century.

Hawks had been an aviator in World War I before entering the cinema in 1919 as a prop man for the Mary Pickford Company. Between 1920 and 1925, he rose to editor, scriptwriter, and finally, assistant director, before leaving to work as a contract director for the Fox Film Corporation. Hawks's career did not begin in earnest until the arrival of sound, when he began to work independently of long-term studio contracts. His first all-talking picture was First National's *The Dawn Patrol* (1930), a grim World War I drama about the awesome death toll among air force flyers, which featured some splendid aerial photography.

Hawks also directed the classic gangster film *Scarface* (1932), his most important work of the early 1930s, which was produced by Howard Hughes for UA. Loosely based by screenwriter Ben Hecht on the career of Al Capone and superbly photographed by Lee Garmes (1898–1978), *Scarface*, the greatest of the 1930s gangster films, marked the beginning of the brilliant Hecht-Hawks collaboration that was to continue throughout the entire decade. The subsequent Hecht-Hawks collaboration for Columbia, *Twentieth Century* (1934), was a smashing success. It tells the story of a tyrannical Broadway producer (John Barrymore) who spends the entire film, much of which takes place aboard the Twentieth Century Limited Express from Chicago to New York, attempting to cajole his estranged actress-wife (Carole Lombard) into appearing in his next show. With its rapid-fire dialogue and fast-paced editing, *Twentieth Century* became the prototype of the screwball comedies of the later 1930s and the 1940s.

Perhaps Hawks's most distinguished film of the 1930s was *The Road to Glory* (1936). The film, produced by Darryl F. Zanuck for Fox, was the product of an unusual combination of talents. Directed by Hawks, written by William Faulkner and Joel Sayre (with the uncredited assistance of Hawks and Nunnally Johnson), photographed by Gregg Toland, and superbly acted by Fredric March and Warner Baxter, it tells a searing tale of the horrors of trench warfare during World War I and ultimately suggests that professionalism, comradeship, and devotion to duty are the only forces that will sustain men in such a brutally hostile environment.

A similar theme pervades *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939) for Columbia, which Hawks wrote with Jules



Furthman on the basis of his own experience as a flyer during World War I. Hawks enlarged his contribution to the screwball comedy genre with the anarchic *Bringing Up Baby* (1938) and *Ball of Fire* (1941) for RKO. He also successfully remade Lewis Milestone's *The Front Page* (1931) as *His Girl Friday* (1940) for Columbia, replete with fast-paced overlapping dialogue, before returning to more serious themes in the quietly patriotic biography of America's greatest World War I hero, *Sergeant York* (1941), which, like his next three films, was produced for Warners.

During World War II, Hawks made the tough combat drama *Air Force* (1943), photographed with documentary-like realism by James Wong Howe, and the hard-boiled romantic melodrama *To Have and Have Not* (1944), adapted from an Ernest Hemingway novel by William Faulkner and Jules Furthman, and teaming Humphrey Bogart for the first time with Lauren Bacall (in her screen debut). The couple also starred in Hawks's bizarre and atmospheric **film noir** *The Big Sleep* (1946), whose plot is so convoluted that even the director and his screenwriters (Faulkner, Furthman, and Leigh Brackett, working from the Raymond Chandler novel) claimed that they didn't understand it.

Hawks's last serious film of the 1940s was the epic Western *Red River* (1948), which sets the psychological duel between a man (John Wayne) and his adopted son (Montgomery Clift) against the sweeping backdrop of the first cattle drive from Texas to Kansas in 1865. Hawks returned to comedy with three films for Fox: *I Was a Male War Bride* (1949) and *Monkey Business* (1952), which endeavored to resurrect the screwball genre, and the robust Technicolor musical *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953). He continued to make films sporadically during the 1950s and the 1960s. Most of these were disappointing, but several, such as the African adventure-comedy *Hatari!* (1962) and the Westerns *Rio Bravo* (1959) and *El Dorado* (1967), still contain the vital spark of hard-hitting, fast-paced Hawksian narrative.

Howard Hawks was a versatile professional who distinguished himself in every major American film genre and virtually inaugurated several of them. Hawks was not primarily a visual stylist—he generally composed his scenes in the eye-level medium shots favored by the studios and worked within the frame as much as possible, avoiding both spectacular montage effects and self-conscious camera movement. As for lighting, he left it to his cameramen, who were among the most distinguished Hollywood has ever known: Gregg Toland, Lee Garmes, James Wong Howe, Tony Gaudio, Ernest Haller, Russell Harlan, and Sid Hickox.

Yet Hawks was a great visual storyteller. His films are frequently characterized as "masculine," and there is no question that his heroes prize the company only of women who, like the characters played by Lauren Bacall, seem to share the code by which these men live. It is probably more accurate, however, to call his films simply "American," in the sense expressed by the French film archivist Henri Langlois: "[Hawks] is the embodiment of modern man. . . . The spirit and physical structure of his work [are] born from contemporary America and [enable] us to better and more fully identify with it, both in admiration and criticism."

(left) Paul Muni in *Scarface* (Howard Hawks, 1932).

Alfred Hitchcock

The fourth major figure of the American sound film in this period was an Englishman trained within the British studio system, Alfred Hitchcock (1899–1980). Like Ford and Hawks, he was a brilliant craftsman; like von Sternberg, he was a subtle stylist. He spent most of his career working in a single genre—the suspense thriller—but his mastery of film form transformed and finally transcended it. Indeed, Andrew Sarris has called him the only contemporary director whose style unites the divergent classical traditions of Murnau (camera movement and mise-en-scène) and Eisenstein (montage). In recent decades, moreover, Hitchcock has arrested the attention of critics and theorists of every imaginable hue, from conservative Roman Catholicism to radical poststructuralist feminism.

After receiving his formal education from the Jesuits at St. Ignatius College and working as a draftsman in the advertising department of a telegraph company, Hitchcock became a scriptwriter, a set designer, and finally, an assistant director, and when producer Michael Balcon bought the Islington studio to form Gainsborough Pictures in 1924, he joined the company as a contract director. Because of a reciprocal agreement between Balcon and Erich Pommer of UFA, Hitchcock's first two features were made in German studios, where he fell under the spell of Expressionism and *Kammerspielfilme*.

Appropriately, his first major success, *The Lodger* (subtitled *A Story of the London Fog*, 1926; released 1927), was in the genre that he was to make so uniquely his own. This Expressionistic suspense thriller, based on Marie Belloc-Lowndes's sensational Jack the Ripper novel of the same title, earned Hitchcock an esteemed



reputation at the age of twenty-seven, and it already contained one of his most memorable effects: the pacing feet of a suspected murderer on the floor above shot through a 1-inch-thick plate-glass ceiling from the perspective of a family group seated below. The young director made six more silent films before returning to the genre again in his—and Britain's—first talkie.

Blackmail (1929) was initially made as a silent film but was reshot and partially dubbed as a sound film. It is one of the best films of its era, notable for its fluid camera style and its expressive use of both naturalistic and nonnaturalistic sound. Adapted from a popular play by Charles Bennett, the plot concerns a woman who is being blackmailed for the murder of an attempted rapist, and Hitchcock used the new medium of sound to inaugurate his characteristic theme of the nightmarish amid the commonplace. At one point, for example, the heroine's subjective feelings of guilt are conveyed by the seemingly endless clanging of a shop bell; later the word *knife*, recalling the murder weapon, emerges from a harmless conversation to haunt her long after the conversation itself has become an indistinct murmur on the sound track. Hitchcock's freedom to achieve such creative effects arose from the necessity of postsynchronizing scenes that had already been shot silently. For the same reason, the action sequences of *Blackmail*, especially those of the first and last reels, manifest a fluidity quite remarkable for an early sound film.

Hitchcock returned to the thriller form with *Murder* (1930) and again proved himself an innovator in the creative use of sound. Adapted by his wife, Alma Reville (1899–1982), from a play by Helen Simpson and Clemence Dane, this story of a famous actor who, convinced of a condemned girl's innocence, solves a murder to prove it, contains the first improvised dialogue sequence, the first use of the sound track to convey a character's stream of consciousness, and many other experiments with nonnaturalistic sound, including a 360-degree pan while dialogue is spoken. (Alma Reville provided screenplays, adaptations, or continuities for many of Hitchcock's films from 1927 to 1950 and became his closest professional advisor for the duration of his career.)

Hitchcock was by now regarded as Britain's most important director. After three more British International Pictures (BIP) films of varying quality, he signed a five-film contract with Gaumont-British, where Michael Balcon had become production chief in 1931, and launched the series of thrillers that was

(left) Lauren Bacall and Humphrey Bogart in *The Big Sleep* (Howard Hawks, 1946).



Anny Ondra in *Blackmail* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1929).

to make him internationally famous. The first was *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934). This complicated and darkly Expressionistic film, the only one that Hitchcock ever remade, concerns a couple on holiday in St. Moritz who learn of a plot to assassinate a visiting statesman in London. Their daughter is kidnapped by the assassins, and the couple must simultaneously recover their child and foil the murder plot without telling the police. The film is a classic Hitchcockian parable of horror asserting itself in the midst of the ordinary and innocent. Its famous set pieces include the concert in the Royal Albert Hall (shot by using the Schüfftan process), where the assassination is aborted by the mother's scream, and the gun battle in the East End, with which the film concludes.

Hitchcock's next film, *The 39 Steps* (1935), deals with yet another classic Hitchcock situation—that of an innocent man who must prove his innocence while being simultaneously pursued by both villains and the police. In *The 39 Steps*, a female secret-service agent is mysteriously murdered in the apartment of Richard Hannay (Robert Donat), who flees London to the north by train and arrives in Scotland. There, he inadvertently walks into the hands of the villain himself, escapes, and then walks into the hands of the police. After a series of further misadventures, he finds himself being pursued across the Scottish moors by both groups while handcuffed to a pretty young teacher (Madeleine Carroll) who believes him to be a murderer. This exciting chase, with its superb ensemble playing by Donat and Carroll, eventually ends in London, where all secrets are revealed and all problems resolved. Witty, fast-paced, and technically brilliant, *The 39 Steps* is narrative filmmaking at its very best. It also contains





The famous sound match from *The 39 Steps* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1935).

some classic examples of audiovisual montage, as when the scream of Hannay's cleaning lady on discovering the secret agent's corpse becomes the shriek of the whistle on the locomotive of the train carrying Hannay to Scotland.

Hitchcock's next film was *Secret Agent* (1936). It concerns a famous writer (John Gielgud) who works as a British agent to track down and kill a German spy in Switzerland during World War I, and its calculated moral ambiguity left many viewers confused, as did its remarkable successor, *Sabotage* (1936). This film was, confusingly enough, a contemporary version of Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent* (1907), in which Verloc, the owner of a small London cinema, works secretly for a group of anarchists bent on destroying the city. The film's high point occurs when Verloc sends his wife's young brother out to plant a time bomb without the boy's knowledge. As the time for detonation grows closer and closer, he boards an omnibus, and Hitchcock's montage becomes increasingly complex until at last the tension is released in a spectacular audience-alienation effect: the bomb explodes, and the boy and his fellow passengers are blown to bits. Later, Mrs. Verloc learns of the death and her husband's responsibility for it, and she murders him at the dinner table with a carving knife. The editing of the dinner scene that immediately precedes this act is among the most powerful and restrained in all of Hitchcock's work: Mrs. Verloc's mounting determination to kill her husband is gradually shown to coincide with his own desire to die for his crime. In addition to such sophisticated montage effects, *Sabotage* is full of references to the cinema and cinematic spectating, owing to Verloc's role as a theater manager.

At this point in his career, having brought international prestige to the British film industry, Hitchcock decided to come to Hollywood. The British economy and the domestic film industry were shrinking while Hitchcock's artistic ambitions were soaring, and by the end of the Depression, the Hollywood studios had become what UFA had been during the 1920s—the center of big-budget film art in the West. He made one more British film, a melodramatic adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's Gothic thriller *Jamaica Inn* (1939) for Erich Pommer and Charles Laughton's Mayfair Productions, and began a seven-year contract with David O. Selznick by adapting another du Maurier novel for the film *Rebecca* (1940). The stately rhythms of this highly polished film marked a change of pace for Hitchcock, who now had the vast technical resources of the American studios at his disposal. *Rebecca* was recognized by Academy Award nominations in every major category of achievement, winning two—Best Picture and Best Black-and-White Cinematography (to George Barnes).

Hitchcock's second American film, *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), was a tour de force of anti-isolationist propaganda cast in the mold of his very best British thrillers; it was also nominated for several major Oscars. Produced by Walter Wanger for UA, it contained several elaborate effects, including a spectacular seaplane crash, created by production designer William Cameron Menzies (1896–1957) and cinematographer Joseph Valentine (1900–1949).



Joan Fontaine and Judith Anderson in *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940).

His next two films were for RKO: a fine, if uncharacteristic, screwball comedy titled *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* (1941), commissioned for the talented comedian Carole Lombard (1908–1942), who died in a plane crash shortly thereafter; and the tense psychological thriller *Suspicion* (1941), a film of considerable intelligence and his first with Cary Grant (1904–1986). In *Suspicion*, Grant plays a ne'er-do-well fortune hunter who marries a wealthy—and, clearly, sexually repressed—Joan Fontaine (in her first appearance since *Rebecca*), and she gradually comes to suspect him of plotting to murder her for her money. Though set convincingly in the English countryside, the film was shot entirely on a soundstage by Harry Stradling (1902–1970), and it is both sinister and psychologically subtle—qualities not significantly damaged by the studio-mandated ending in which Fontaine's fears are shown to be the product of neurotic delusion (which, in a way, is more sinister yet). In a perfect example of Hollywood's institutional/ideological sexism, RKO ordered this ending so as not to blemish Grant's image as a star persona.

Hitchcock then returned to the subject of espionage with *Saboteur* (1942), a spectacular double-chase film that includes newsreel footage of an actual act of sabotage (the burning of the SS *Normandie*) and concludes with a mad pursuit at the top of the Statue of Liberty. In 1943, Hitchcock made what he considered his best American film, *Shadow of a Doubt*, a restrained tale of a psychotic murderer's visit to relatives in the small California town of Santa Rosa, where he is perceived to



Alfred Hitchcock directing Ingrid Bergman in *Notorious* (1946).

be normal. The film is distinguished by Joseph Valentine's subtle camera work, superb performances by the entire cast, and Thornton Wilder's intelligent screenplay. The sound track employs overlapping dialogue mixes of the type used by Orson Welles in *Citizen Kane* (1941) and *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), but it is ultimately the visual texture of the film, with its intricate psychological doublings, that makes *Shadow of a Doubt* one of Hitchcock's three or four undisputed masterworks.

Hitchcock turned to the war itself with *Lifeboat* (1944), an allegory of the world conflict in which a group of people representing a wide cultural and political spectrum are trapped together in a lifeboat after a Nazi U-boat attack. Hitchcock's first postwar film was the psychological thriller *Spellbound* (1945), in which the head psychiatrist of an asylum comes to believe that he is in reality a murderous amnesiac. Expensively produced by Selznick International, this movie was cluttered with Freudian symbols and contained many spectacular technical effects, including a dream sequence designed by the artist Salvador Dalí and the American cinema's first partially electronic score (for which composer Miklós Rózsa won an Academy Award).

Notorious (1946), a tale of atomic espionage by Nazis set in Rio de Janeiro, was equally well produced and directed by Hitchcock at RKO. Its elegant black-and-white photography by Ted Tetzlaff (1903–1995) was an aesthetic triumph. There are several splendid sequences in the film, but the most stunning involves a swooping crane shot that begins at the top of a ballroom staircase and proceeds through a whole series of chambers before finally coming to rest in a close-up on a key held in the heroine's hand.

After directing a technically dazzling but ponderous courtroom melodrama called *The Paradine Case* (1947), from a disjointed screenplay by Selznick, Hitchcock made two films for his own production company, Transatlantic Pictures. Hitchcock's first Transatlantic film was also his first film in color—the boldly experimental *Rope* (1948). It was adapted from a play by Patrick Hamilton (based on the infamous Leopold-Loeb case of 1924) in which two young intellectuals murder a friend in order to prove their Nietzschean superiority to conventional morality, conceal his corpse in a living-room chest, and then stage a dinner party around it for his relatives. The film was shot by Joseph Valentine (in facilities rented from Warner Bros.) within the confines of a single large penthouse set, in ten-minute takes with a continuously moving camera, for which Hitchcock developed tracking shots of extraordinary complexity. The few cuts were concealed by invisible editing and confined to reel changes, and there were no time lapses in the narrative, so the running time of the film and the dramatic time of the action coincide, and the film appears to have been shot as a single continuous take. The camera's co-star in *Rope* was the set's arduously constructed background—an exact miniature replica of a large portion of the New York skyline lighted by 8,000 tiny incandescent bulbs and 200 neon signs, each wired separately, which marked time by gradually representing the coming of twilight and nightfall to a vault of spun-glass clouds.

The second and last Transatlantic production, *Under Capricorn* (1949), continued Hitchcock's experiments with the long take in several sequences of extraordinary beauty, but it ultimately failed to cohere as a narrative and was poorly received. Similar difficulties afflicted *Stage Fright* (1950), a Warner Bros. production shot in London, much admired today for its subtle interplay of cinematic and theatrical illusion and the fluid camerawork of Wilkie Cooper (1911–2000).

Actively seeking now to produce a commercial hit, Hitchcock entered his second major period with *Strangers on a Train* (1951) for Warners, based on a Patricia Highsmith novel with a screenplay by Raymond Chandler and Czenzi Ormonde. This psychological thriller concerns a murder pact jokingly made between two young men, Bruno and Guy, who meet on a train, each agreeing to kill someone who stands in the other's way. Bruno, a psychotic, unexpectedly fulfills the pact by murdering Guy's troublesome wife and then expects Guy to murder his (Bruno's) father. Horrified and consumed with guilt, Guy refuses to carry out his end of the deal, and Bruno attempts to frame him for the murder already committed. Photographed on location by Robert Burks (1910–1968), who with a single exception became Hitchcock's constant collaborator from 1951 until Burks's death in 1968, this film contains some of Hitchcock's most psychologically subtle characterizations (especially in Robert Walker's Bruno) and concludes with a spectacular fight between Bruno and Guy on a merry-go-round that careens out of control and collapses.

As Hitchcock had anticipated, *Strangers on a Train* was an enormous popular success, and he made two more films for Warners. *I Confess* (1952), shot on location in the city of Quebec, concerns a priest who hears the confession of a murderer and is then accused of committing the murder himself. *Dial M for Murder* (1954) was an ingenious adaptation of a stage play filmed in color and 3-D but released "flat" when the vogue for the process had died away. Hitchcock's next four films were made in color for Paramount.

In *Rear Window* (1954) Hitchcock restricted his scope of action even more rigidly than he had done in either *Lifeboat* or *Rope*. The entire film is shot from a camera confined within the apartment of a professional photographer, L. B. Jeffries, who is recovering from a broken leg, and during most of the film the camera records what he sees through his rear window. To pass the time, the photographer begins to spy on his neighbors through his telescopic lenses and gradually forms the conviction that one of them has murdered his wife, dismembered the corpse, and buried it in the courtyard garden. Jeffries's subsequent attempts to prove the murder endanger his fiancée's life (and, finally, his own), while—like the audience itself—he can only sit and watch from a perspective limited by the sequencing of his neighbors' windows and the power of his lens. *Rear Window* is a disturbing and profoundly modern film: its theme of the moral complicity of the voyeur (and, by extension, the film spectator) in what he watches anticipates both Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966) and Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974), to say nothing of Hitchcock's own *Psycho* (1960).

In 1955 (the year he became a naturalized American citizen), Hitchcock directed *To Catch a Thief*, a stylish comedy thriller about a cat burglar, shot on location on the French Riviera in Paramount's new widescreen process, VistaVision. As we might expect, he became one of the first directors to use the widescreen effectively for pictorial and dramatic composition, and all of his subsequent films, with the exception of *The Wrong Man* (1956), were shot in widescreen ratios. *The Trouble with Harry* (1955), which inaugurated his brilliant nine-year collaboration with composer Bernard Herrmann (1911–1975), used VistaVision to capture the autumn splendor of the Vermont woods as a background to a sophisticated



Madeleine (Kim Novak) in an image suggestive of immortality in *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958).

and witty black comedy about a corpse that refuses to stay buried because someone keeps digging it up.

In the same year, Hitchcock remade *The Man Who Knew Too Much* as a big-budget commercial entertainment, featuring a lush Bernard Herrmann score and sequences shot on location in Morocco and London. Though updated and modernized, the second version reprises the Albert Hall sequence of the original on a vast scale, with Herrmann conducting the one hundred–piece London Symphony Orchestra in Arthur Benjamin's "Storm Cloud Cantata" in six-track stereophonic sound. Hitchcock next made a stark semi-documentary of false arrest and imprisonment, *The Wrong Man,* his last Warners film, shot on location in black and white in New York City.

In 1958, Hitchcock directed *Vertigo,* shot on location in San Francisco in VistaVision, which many critics consider his greatest and most visually poetic film. Cast in the form of a detective thriller, *Vertigo* is actually a tale of romantic obsession brilliantly adapted by Alec Coppel and Samuel Taylor from the novel *D'entre les morts* (*From Amongst the Dead*), by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac, the authors of *Les diaboliques*. Scottie (James Stewart), a former police detective, has acquired a pathological fear of heights (acrophobia, or vertigo) by accidentally causing a fellow officer to fall to his death from a rooftop—facts conveyed by an extraordinary twenty-five-shot montage sequence in the film's first ninety seconds. He quits the force because of this debility but reluctantly accepts a job from a wealthy acquaintance named Gavin Elster to follow his wife, Madeleine (Kim Novak), who believes herself to be a reincarnation of her Spanish great-grandmother, Carlotta Valdez—a much-abused woman who died insane, by her own hand. In the process of trailing Madeleine through the precipitous streets of San Francisco and saving her from an apparent suicide attempt near the Golden Gate Bridge, Scottie falls in love with her. She dies—or seems to—by throwing herself off the bell tower of an old Spanish mission, in part because Scottie's vertigo prevents him from stopping her. After an inquest ascribing her death to his negligence, Scottie plunges into madness but is subsequently cured.

Later, still deeply bereaved, he discovers a shop girl, named Judy, who bears a striking physical resemblance to Madeleine, although she is coarse and common, whereas Madeleine was a romantic idol, and he spends the rest of the film obsessively trying to re-create the image of the dead woman in the living one. The two women are actually the same woman, who has acted as a foil in an audacious murder plot of Elster's—a fact that Hitchcock reveals to the audience (but not to Scottie) two-thirds of the way through the film, destroying suspense in order to concentrate our attention on mood and ambience. The poignancy of Scottie's situation (and also of Judy's, because she has fallen in love with him during her masquerade) is that the closer he comes to making Judy over as Madeleine, the further he moves from both women, because Madeleine wasn't real in the first place but rather—like an actress in a

film—someone playing a made-up part. The logic of this awful double bind produces *Vertigo*'s harrowing, inevitable conclusion, in which Scottie, having at last recreated Madeleine perfectly in Judy, realizes that they have been the same person all along. Then, his vertigo finally cured, he literally drags her to the top of the bell tower where Madeleine "died," and Judy-Madeleine falls accidentally to her—this time, very real—death.

No brief description can really do justice to the intricate structure of this remarkable film, whose theme of love transcending death resonates through such mainstays of Western narrative art as William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, and Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. Bernard Herrmann's haunting score sustains this resonance, alternating passages of discordant contrary movement with lush orchestral leitmotifs based on Wagner's opera, especially the "Liebestod" ("love-death") aria of its conclusion.

Visually and aurally, *Vertigo* is constructed as a series of descending spirals, as Scottie is drawn irrevocably deeper into the spiritual vortex created by his romantic longing for Madeleine, whose very inaccessibility is her most fatal attraction. His vertigo—the image and emblem of this longing—is transferred to the audience at various points through dizzying reverse-tracking/forward-zoom shots, elaborately executed by Hitchcock's special-effects team, as Scottie peers into chasms from precarious heights (a city street from a rooftop, the bottom of the bell tower from its staircase, and so on).

Madeleine's unattainability is conveyed—as when Scottie first glimpses her at Ernie's Restaurant—through oblique 360-degree cutting, which, by violating the rules of classical Hollywood editing, creates for her a narrative space that doesn't (or, at least, shouldn't) exist. Such "vortical" editing, combined with Burks's subtly tracking subjective camera and the film's highly stylized use of color, are strategies whereby we become so completely identified with Scottie's perspective that his vision of Madeleine—that is, his psychological entrapment by a manufactured romantic goddess—becomes our own.

Yet after Judy's revelation of the murder plot, our perceptual path diverges from Scottie's, and his delusion, which we can no longer share, appears to us increasingly pathetic, hopeless, and doomed. The critic Robin Wood, who wrote the first serious English-language study of Hitchcock's art (*Hitchcock's Films*, 1965), pointedly remarked that the last third of *Vertigo* is "among the most disturbing and painful experiences the cinema has to offer," and this is unquestionably true. Because we have shared the failure of Scottie's romantic aspirations so thoroughly in the body of the film, its horrible recurrence at *Vertigo*'s conclusion defies all of our narrative expectations. We are robbed not merely of a Hollywood-style happy ending, but also of the cathartic satisfaction of classical tragedy.



The bell-tower staircase in *Vertigo*: Scottie's disequilibrium (and ours).

When *Vertigo* ends, all the pain and death have meant nothing: in ending, the film suggests that its whole torturous process is about to start again. By consistently revealing the vulnerability of its male protagonist and the spurious nature of its heroine, and in refusing (emotionally, at any rate—like the closed circle of a descending spiral) to end, *Vertigo* suggests the fraudulence not only of romantic love, but of the whole Hollywood narrative tradition that underwrites it. At a deeper level, however, it suggests a more difficult truth: that the ultimate consequence of romantic idealism—of aspiring beyond the possible—is, successively, neurosis, psychosis, and perversion, or, more specifically, necrophilia.

Vertigo was not successful with either the critics or the public. Hitchcock was determined that his next film should be a great popular success, and he produced exactly that in *North by Northwest* (1959), a return to the witty double-chase mode of *The 39 Steps* (1935), which at times it seems intended to parody. Stylishly scripted by Ernest Lehman (1915–2005) and shot by Burks in VistaVision for MGM, this film of a New York advertising man pursued across America by both government authorities and nuclear spies contains some classic Hitchcock sequences, most notably the (literally) cliff-hanging conclusion on Mount Rushmore and the superbly constructed machine-gun attack on the hero by a crop duster in the middle of an Indiana cornfield. It also employs a sophisticated manipulation of Freudian



Cary Grant pursued by a crop duster in *North by Northwest* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1959).

symbols, especially those of the Oedipal fantasy, and a stunning Bernard Herrmann score to create a totality of effect wholly satisfying to the senses, the emotions, and the intellect. Or, as Hitchcock confessed to Lehman at one point during the shooting:

> Ernie, do you realize what we're doing in this picture? The audience is like a giant organ that you and I are playing. At one moment we play *this* note on them and get *this* reaction, and then we play *that* chord and they react *that* way. And someday we won't even have to make a movie—there'll be electrodes implanted in their brains, and we'll just press different buttons and they'll go 'ooooh' and 'aaaah' and we'll frighten them, and make them laugh. Won't that be wonderful?

That was to be *Psycho* (1960; adapted by Joseph Stefano from the novel by Robert Bloch), Hitchcock's coldest, blackest, and most brilliant Hollywood film. Hitchcock produced *Psycho* for $800,000, using his own television crew at Revue Studios, the television branch of Universal Pictures. Shot for Paramount in black and white by John L. Russell, *Psycho* is at once the fulfillment of *Vertigo*'s necrophilic longing and a savage revenge on that film's critics. Before one-third of the film is over, the beautiful and sexually provocative heroine (Janet Leigh, b. 1927), who is on the run from the police for having stolen $40,000 from her boss, is slashed to death in a motel shower in a harrowing forty-five-second montage sequence that many critics think rivals the Odessa-steps sequence of Eisenstein's *Potemkin*.

Psycho is an outrageously manipulative film and is thus, like *Potemkin*, a stunningly successful experiment in audience stimulation and response. Hitchcock's precisely planned knife-murder sequence is in fact a masterful vindication of the Kuleshov–Eisenstein school of montage: in a series of eighty-seven rapidly alternating fragmentary shots, we seem to witness a horribly violent and brutal murder on the screen, yet only once do we see an image of the knife penetrating flesh, and that image is completely bloodless. A second murder is so perfectly and unpredictably timed that it delivers a large perceptual shock, even after many viewings. Time and again, Hitchcock uses his camera and his montage to deceive the audience by leading it up cinematic blind alleys and strewing the screen with visual red herrings.

He also offers the most morbid narrative of his career—the knife murderer is Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins, 1932–1992), a psychotic mama's boy who lives in a Gothic house with the rotting corpse of his mother, some twelve years dead by his own hand (or so we are told at the end by the police psychiatrist). Many critics in 1960 were revolted by *Psycho* and appalled at its cynicism, but today its technical brilliance places it among the most important of postwar American films, and its blackness and bleakness look decidedly modern.

By the late 1940s, Hitchcock had become a major client of the talent agency MCA (formerly, Music Corporation of America) and had formed a close relationship with its president, Lew Wasserman (1913–2002), that would influence much of his later career. In 1955, Wasserman packaged a deal for Hitchcock to produce and lend his name to a program of weekly half-hour telefilms for CBS, which from 1955 to 1960 became one of the highest-rated shows in television history. Hitchcock personally directed only twenty episodes, but the programs, and especially his droll introductions to them, made Hitchcock a national figure. They also made him rich—by exchanging his rights to the series plus *Psycho* in 1962 for 150,000 shares of MCA stock, he became the third-largest shareholder in the conglomerate, which gave him considerable freedom to produce his own films. No other director in America could have produced *Vertigo* as a big-budget feature with major stars in 1958 or received an Academy Award nomination for a film as dark and cheaply made as *Psycho* in 1960. As with virtually every other aspect of his life, Hitchcock used his television career to further his all-consuming, solitary passion to make films.

Hitchcock produced all of his subsequent films for Universal. The first of these, *The Birds* (1963), was nearly three years in preparation and at the time of its release seemed to many an exercise in pure technique. Adapted

(right) Janet Leigh and Antony Perkins in *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960): shots from the shower murder sequence.



















Tippi Hedren under attack in *The Birds* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1963).

by Evan Hunter from a Daphne du Maurier short story, it concerns a savage assault by millions of birds in the vicinity of Bodega Bay, California, on the human population of the area. The special effects by Hitchcock and Ub Iwerks (1901–1971), one of Disney's greatest animators, are remarkable, as is the menacing electronic sound track produced and recorded by Remi Gassmann and Oskar Sala. Yet the film is slowly paced until the bird attacks begin en masse, and it has an oddly formal quality.

Today, critics are inclined to see *The Birds* as forming the third part of a trilogy with *Vertigo* and *Psycho*, which posits a world gone speechless and numb through the dislocation of human feeling. Although the bird attacks on the town are spectacularly rendered through classically structured montage, the overall mood of the film is no less stark than that of *The Wrong Man*. (Its art director, Robert Boyle, has said that the film's overall design was inspired by Edvard Munch's painting *The Scream*, "the sense of bleakness and madness in a kind of wilderness expressing an inner state.")

The Birds, Hitchcock's most expensive film, was also one of his most successful, and he went on to cast its star, Tippi Hedren (b. 1935), in his last important work, *Marnie* (1964). Like *Vertigo*, it is a film of obsession in which a man falls in love with a severely neurotic woman and attempts to cure her. Although it was much maligned for the visible artificiality of the process photography and the painted backdrops of some of its scenes (whose stylization may, in fact, have been intentional), *Marnie* contains sequences of hallucinatory beauty worthy of Hitchcock's finest work, and it belongs, at the very least, to that category designated by François Truffaut as "greatest flawed films." *Marnie*, however, failed miserably at the box office, and it became Hitchcock's last film with the three most important collaborators of his late period—cinematographer Robert Burks, editor George Tomasini (both of whom died shortly after *Marnie* was completed), and composer Bernard Herrmann (whose score was blamed by Universal for *Marnie*'s commercial failure).

He next made two Cold War espionage films—*Torn Curtain* (1966) and *Topaz* (1969)—which showed progressive indifference, if not decline. *Frenzy* (1972), however, marked a strong comeback by combining the excitement of the British double-chase films with the psychological introspection, kinetic violence, and technical virtuosity of *Psycho*. Shot on location in London by Gil Taylor, this film concerns a sexual psychopath who strangles women with neckties; although it is profoundly misogynistic and contains a strangulation scene that borders on the pornographic, *Frenzy* became one of the most popular films of 1972.

With *Family Plot* (1976), Hitchcock returned to black humor in a bizarre tale of kidnapping, phony spiritualism, and murder that contained distinct overtones of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (the 1956 version)

and *North by Northwest*. He was working on the screenplay of *The Short Night*, an espionage thriller based on the real-life case of the British double agent George Blake, when he died at his home in Beverly Hills on April 29, 1980.

Owing to his rigorous preproduction practices, in which each film was conceptualized, storyboarded, and planned logistically from beginning to end in advance of shooting, Hitchcock exercised an unusual degree of control over the fifty-three features he made between 1925 and 1976, even when he was working for such a megalomaniac as David Selznick. (After leaving Selznick International in 1947, he functioned as his own producer, no matter who was financing and releasing his films.) Yet the tendency to see him as merely a brilliant technician, along the prevailing critical trend, gave way in the 1970s to a more judicious assessment of him as both a formalist and a moralist, a status acknowledged by the American Film Institute's presentation to him of its Life Achievement Award in 1979. Today, Hitchcock is understood to be one of the leading figures in film history, the peer of Griffith, Eisenstein, Renoir, and Welles.

About his commitment to style there can be no question—during the 1930s, he was one of the few directors to use Eisensteinian montage in an era of primarily functional editing; his mastery of the long take and the moving camera had been apparent since the 1940s; and his achievements in widescreen composition in the 1950s are of major historical importance for contemporary film. Beyond form, however, there is Hitchcock the moralist and the fatalist, who created an image of the modern world in which the perilous and the monstrous lurk within the most ordinary circumstances of everyday life. It is a world that shares much with the work of Franz Kafka and comprehends what Hannah Arendt termed "the banality of evil." It is also a world in which, as Robin Wood noted, there erupts from time to time "an animus against women and specifically against the female body" every bit as real as Griffith's racism.

Hitchcock's designation as "the master of suspense" was a public-relations gambit based on the popular misperception of his work. His greatest films—*Sabotage, Shadow of a Doubt, Vertigo, Psycho, The Birds*—have little or none of that quality. Hitchcock did not so much work in a genre as create one—the "Hitchcock film"—that has been endlessly imitated but never surpassed. He was an original whose life was his art and who succeeded, perhaps more than any other artist of the century, in making his own fears, obsessions, and fantasies part of our collective psyche.

George Cukor, William Wyler, and Frank Capra

Three other directors of historical importance emerged from Hollywood in the 1930s, although their work was less substantial and cohesive than that of the four major figures discussed in this chapter.

George Cukor (1899–1983) originally came to Hollywood from Broadway as a dialogue director, working with both Lewis Milestone and Ernst Lubitsch before directing his first important film, *A Bill of Divorcement*, starring Katharine Hepburn and John Barrymore, in 1932. With a series of stylish comedies and sophisticated literary adaptations, he established himself as one of the foremost craftsmen of American cinema. Cukor had a flair for elegant decor and witty dialogue and a facility for directing female stars that has typed him as a "women's director," but his talent was really more versatile than the term implies. Cukor worked exclusively under contract to MGM in the 1930s and the 1940s but began to freelance in the postwar era.

Among his most important films are *Dinner at Eight* (1933), *Little Women* (1933), *The Women* (1939), *The Philadelphia Story* (1940), *Gaslight* (1944), *Born Yesterday* (1950), *It Should Happen to You* (1954), *A Star Is Born* (1954), *Les Girls* (1957), and *My Fair Lady* (1964), which earned him a long-deserved Oscar for direction. These are all handsome, graceful productions that feature brilliant performances by some of the most talented actors and actresses in the American cinema, many of whom he guided to awards. Cukor's work reveals no strong personal vision, but it is remarkably consistent in its intelligence, sensitivity, and taste. In 1981, he received the prestigious D. W. Griffith Award from the Directors Guild of America and, with *Rich and Famous*, became the oldest director ever to make a major studio film; in 1982, the film won the Golden Lion at Venice.

William Wyler (1902–1981) was another fine American filmmaker. He began his career by directing B-Westerns and shorts for his uncle, Carl Laemmle, at Universal Pictures. In 1935, he went to work for Samuel Goldwyn and earned a reputation as an accomplished adaptor of other people's work—most notably, Lillian Hellman's play *The Children's Hour*, which Wyler filmed as *These Three* in 1936 and remade under its original title in 1961; Sidney Kingsley's play *Dead End*, with a screenplay by Hellman (1937); and Hellman's play *The Little Foxes* (1941). He also directed adaptations of novels—*Dodsworth* (1936), *Wuthering Heights* (1939), *Mrs. Miniver* (1942) for MGM and





Laurence Olivier and Merle Oberon in *Wuthering Heights* (William Wyler, 1939).

The Heiress (1949; from Henry James's *Washington Square*) for Paramount—and other plays (*Jezebel* [1938] and *The Letter* [1940], both for Warners). His collaborator for much of this period was the brilliant cinematographer Gregg Toland, who experimented with deep-focus photography in Wyler films such as *Wuthering Heights* and *The Little Foxes* before he used the process so magnificently in Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941).

Wyler's *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), his last film for Goldwyn, was hailed as a masterpiece in the year of its release and swept the Academy Awards (as *Mrs. Miniver* had done four years earlier), although it is really a rather conventional, if intensely felt, drama of the problems of servicemen attempting to adjust to postwar American life. The inflated reputation that his wartime films brought him led Wyler to pursue ever more ambitious projects in the 1950s, culminating in the widescreen blockbuster *Ben-Hur* (1959) for MGM, which set an all-time record by receiving eleven major Oscars.

Nevertheless, he continued to produce interesting work during this period, much of it for Paramount, including his tough, cynical action film *Detective Story* (1951); *Carrie* (1952), his adaptation of Dreiser's turn-of-the-century novel *Sister Carrie*; and the tense contemporary drama *The Desperate Hours* (1955), based on Joseph Hayes's novel. In the 1960s, Wyler staged something of a critical comeback with a powerful adaptation of John Fowles's novel *The Collector* (1965). In 1975, Wyler was selected for the American Film Institute's Life Achievement Award in recognition of his past contributions.

(left) Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison in *My Fair Lady* (George Cukor, 1964).

Frank Capra (1897–1991) was a Sicilian who emigrated to Los Angeles in 1903 with his family, where he ultimately earned a degree in chemical engineering from the California Institute of Technology. Unable to find employment in that field, he went to work as a gag writer for Hal Roach, Mack Sennett, and finally Harry Langdon, for whom he wrote the hit *Tramp, Tramp, Tramp* (1926) and directed *The Strong Man* (1926) and *Long Pants* (1927). When this collaboration ended in creative differences, Capra went to work for Harry Cohn at Columbia Pictures, where he made the studio's first talking feature (*The Donovan Affair*, 1929) and a popular series of armed-forces adventure films with the team of Jack Holt and Ralph Graves—*Submarine* (1928), *Flight* (1929), and *Dirigible* (1931).

In 1931, Capra made his first film with screenwriter Robert Riskin (the Jean Harlow vehicle *Platinum Blonde*) and began the collaboration that would produce the great Columbia screwball comedies *Lady for a Day* (1933), *It Happened One Night* (1934), *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), *You Can't Take It with You* (1938), and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), as well as the sumptuous utopian fantasy *Lost Horizon* (1937). Capra won the Academy Award for direction three times with this series, and he ended the decade as one of the most sought-after filmmakers in Hollywood. Such was his clout that he and Riskin were able to form an independent company (Frank Capra Productions) to produce and distribute their next film, the anti-Fascist parable *Meet John Doe* (1941), which was a failure and ended their relationship.

During World War II, Capra enlisted in the army and quickly became head of the Morale Branch's newly formed film unit. Here, he became producer-director of the extraordinary Why We Fight documentary series. Originally commissioned to indoctrinate servicemen, this seven-film series was ultimately shown to general audiences in theaters around the country at President Roosevelt's behest, so powerful was it as an instrument of mass persuasion. (Capra won his fourth Oscar for *Prelude to War* [1942], the series' first installment.) Only months after the war, Capra attempted independence again by forming Liberty Films with George Stevens and William Wyler. Capra made only two Liberty films before the company was sold to Paramount in 1947—*It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) and *State of the Union* (1948)—both of which failed at the box office.

After making two Bing Crosby films—*Riding High* (1950) and *Here Comes the Groom* (1951)—to fulfill his part of the Liberty deal with Paramount, Capra went into semiretirement, emerging to direct the Frank Sinatra vehicle *A Hole in the Head* (1959) and *Pocketful of Miracles* (1961), a remake of *Lady for a Day*. After he published his best-selling autobiography, *The Name above the Title*, in 1971, Capra became something of a cult figure but made no more films. His influence, however, has been acknowledged across a wide range of directors, such as John Ford, Ermanno Olmi, Milos Forman, Satyajit Ray, and Yasujiro Ozu, and he received the American Film Institute's Life Achievement Award in 1982.

During the 1930s, Capra had achieved a degree of autonomy and recognition unprecedented within the American studio system, and it may be that the failure of his own company after the war embittered him to the filmmaking establishment. Whatever the case, he made only one great film after his triumphs of the Depression years, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and it is a work that, for all of its apparent buoyancy, suggests some extremely dark possibilities for postwar American life.



James Stewart and Donna Reed in *It's a Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra, 1946).

The Heritage of the Studio System

The coming of sound threatened to destroy the international market that film had enjoyed since Méliès by introducing the language barrier between national industries. During the first few years of sound, Frenchmen would hiss and boo the dialogue in German films, and vice versa; the British and Americans found each other's accents incomprehensible; and there was the problem of regional dialects within a single nation. To overcome this barrier, for several years, films were shot in different language versions at the time of production.

This expensive practice was soon abandoned when a whole new branch of the industry evolved to dub and subtitle films for foreign markets. (In Hollywood, foreign-language versions of English-language features could be made for less than 30 percent of the original budget, but in early 1930, Paramount built a vast new studio complex at Joinville in the suburbs of Paris to mass-produce films in five separate languages. Within months, the other Hollywood majors had joined Paramount, and Joinville became a movie factory that operated twenty four hours a day to produce films in as many as fifteen languages.)

The American film industry, long accustomed to international dominion, was able to maintain its control of the world market by virtue of its vast capital and, for a while at least, its wholesale ownership of the main patents for sound equipment. Yet because the country's largest corporate interests dominated the American studios, American cinema of the 1930s had a specifically ideological orientation, which the Production Code incarnated.

The central tenets of the code were that the Depression, if it existed at all, had little impact on most people's lives; that there was no crime in the streets or corruption in government; that the authority of the police and the military was absolute; that religion and the nuclear family were sacred, coextensive institutions; and finally, that most Americans in the 1930s lived in cottages behind white picket fences on peaceful streets in Anytown, USA. By regulating the "moral" content of American films, the Breen Code was regulating their social content as well, so that what purported to be a blueprint for "cleaning up the movies" was actually an instrument of social control in a period of economic chaos.

Thus, however great its aesthetic achievements—and they are clearly manifold—American cinema of the 1930s consistently concealed from the American people the *reality* of the Depression, and later, of the war in Europe. This is a matter not of opinion, but of historical record: with several notable exceptions (e.g., Warner Bros.' *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, Mervyn LeRoy, 1932; United Artists' *Our Daily Bread*, King Vidor, 1934), Hollywood did not seriously confront the social misery caused by the Depression until the release of Fox's *The Grapes of Wrath* (John Ford) in 1940; the first Hollywood film to acknowledge the Nazi threat in Europe, Warner Bros.' *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (Anatole Litvak), did not appear until 1939.

So perhaps the final comment on Hollywood in the 1930s should be this: Sound had been added to the cinema as the result of a bitter economic struggle between competing American production companies; the technology of sound recording had first been perfected by American engineers; and the creative use of sound had been pioneered almost exclusively by American filmmakers. Yet with regard to the social, sexual, and political dimensions of human experience, the American sound film during the 1930s remained quite effectively "silent."



Charles Blavette and Celia Montalván in *Toni* (Jean Renoir, 1935).



09

Europe in the Thirties

The International Diffusion of Sound

Having successfully created large new markets for their sound-recording technologies at home, Western Electric and RCA were anxious to do the same abroad, and this motive went hand in glove with the desire of American studios to extend their control of the international film industry into the sound era. Accordingly, the Big Five began to export sound films in late 1928, and ERPI (Electrical Research Products Incorporated—Western Electric's aggressive marketing agent) and RCA began installing their equipment in first-run European theaters at the same time. British exhibitors converted most rapidly, with 22 percent wired in 1929 and 63 percent by the end of 1932.

German and French exhibitors converted more slowly, largely because in 1928 a German cartel had been formed to stem the invasion of American sound equipment. Backed by German, Dutch, and Swiss capital, Tobis (the Tonbild Syndikat AG) had acquired the European rights to the Tri-Ergon sound-on-film system and began to wire German theaters for its use. At the same time, Germany's two largest electrical manufacturers, Siemens & Halske AG, and Allgemeine Elektrizitätsgesellschaft (AEG), formed the Klangfilm Syndicate to exploit a competing system mutually developed by the corporations on the basis of Kuchenmeister, Pederson-Poulsen, and Messter patents. After

several months of feuding with each other over European markets, Tobis and Klangfilm merged in March 1929 to combat the threat of American domination of sound film. With capital assets of more than $100 million and venture capital provided by the Dutch bank Oyens and Sons, Tobis-Klangfilm quickly concluded cross-licensing agreements with the British and French Photophone Company and British Talking Pictures Ltd., giving it production, distribution, and manufacturing branches in every country in Europe.

Almost immediately, Tobis-Klangfilm began to enter suits against Western Electric and ERPI, and their licensees, for patent infringement in all of its territories, and won final injunctions in Germany, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Switzerland, and Austria. As American foreign grosses plummeted by 75 percent, the Hollywood monopolists agreed to boycott the markets in dispute. Simultaneously, in July 1929, the General Electric Corporation (which held a controlling interest in RCA) acquired part interest in AEG and nudged Tobis-Klangfilm into a cooperative releasing agreement with RKO. To avoid a self-destructive patent war, ERPI (i.e., Western Electric), RCA, and Tobis-Klangfilm convened the German-American Film Conference in Paris on June 19, 1930. Their purpose was to carve up among themselves a world market for sound film equipment conservatively valued at $250 million.

A final agreement, signed on July 22, 1930, divided the world into four territories: Tobis-Klangfilm was given exclusive rights to Central Europe and Scandinavia; ERPI and RCA got the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, and the Soviet Union; the United Kingdom was split between them, 25 percent going to Tobis-Klangfilm and 75 percent to ERPI and RCA; and the rest of the world was open territory. The three giants also agreed to pool all of their patents, exchange technical information, and drop all pending litigation. This informal cartel never really held together, and its terms were renegotiated several times before it collapsed in 1939 in the face of war in Europe. Nevertheless, Tobis-Klangfilm succeeded in fending off the American bid for world domination and produced, in conjunction with other factors, a marked decline in Hollywood's influence in Europe.

Britain

Due to the rapidity with which its theaters were wired and the (relative) lack of a language barrier, however, the United Kingdom became the first major foreign market for Hollywood's sound films. British cinema had always been a stepchild of the American industry, and during the 1920s, it had almost ceased to exist. Yet in 1927, Parliament passed the Cinematograph Film Act, setting strict quotas on the number of foreign films that could be shown in the country; this had the effect of stimulating domestic production and investment.



Sabu as Mowgli, with Kaa, the python, in *The Jungle Book* (Alexander Korda, 1942), a British film distributed by United Artists.

The British film industry doubled in size from 1927 to 1928, and the number of features it produced rose from 20 to 128. The expansion continued well into the 1930s, enabling the British to compete with Hollywood not merely nationally, but for the first time in its history, internationally, on a modest scale. Many of the films produced by the new boom were "quota quickies"—the British equivalent of the low-budget American B-film—but some were distinguished undertakings by serious producers, such as Alexander Korda (b. Sándor Kellner, 1893–1956) and Michael Balcon (1896–1977).

The producer-director Korda and his two younger brothers, the director Zoltan (1895–1961) and the art director Vincent (1897–1979), were Hungarians who settled in England and founded London Film Productions there in the early 1930s. They collaborated on many outstanding costume spectacles, which did much to establish Great Britain's position in the international market.

Michael Balcon was successively the director of production for the most important and discriminating

British studios of the era: Gainsborough (which he founded in 1924), Gaumont-British (where he produced for Hitchcock), Ealing Studios, and the Rank Organization. This was the era in British cinema that witnessed the flowering of Hitchcock's thrillers, the literate period films of Anthony Asquith (1902–1968), the Jessie Matthews musicals of Victor Saville, and the excellent documentaries produced by John Grierson (1898–1972) and his socially "committed" British documentary movement for the Empire Marketing Board (EMB).

By 1937, the British industry had the second largest annual output in the world (225 features), and British films were competing strongly with American films on an international scale. Yet British producers were also deeply in debt, and the following year witnessed many bankruptcies and studio closings. In 1938, fewer than one hundred features were made and fewer still were released, a reflection of Europe's uncertain political future and the troubled world economy.

Germany

The German film industry entered the sound era from a position of relative strength due to its ownership of the Tobis-Klangfilm recording patents, although the Weimar Republic was already on the brink of collapse. As in the United States, the first German sound films were unremarkable popular musicals, and the trend toward escapist entertainment grew as the nation sank ever more deeply into economic and political trouble. Yet some very important and distinguished films came out of the early sound period in Germany.

Perhaps the most significant and influential work of Germany's early sound period was Fritz Lang's *M* (1931), with a script by Lang's wife, Thea von Harbou, based on the infamous Düsseldorf child murders. In *M*, Peter Lorre (1904–1964) plays a psychotic murderer of little girls in a large German city, who is ultimately tracked down not by the police but by members of the local underworld. Through cutting, Lang establishes a clear parallel between the two groups. Lorre is brilliant as the tortured psychopath who wants desperately to stop killing but is constantly overpowered by his uncontrollable compulsion, and *M* is very much in the gloomy tradition of *Kammerspiel*. Studio-produced and highly stylized in its realism, the film contains no musical score, but is distinguished by its expressive use of nonnaturalistic sound, such as in the recurring theme from Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suite*, which the murderer whistles off-screen before committing his crimes.

Not the least amazing thing about *M* is the way it deals with a revolting subject in a subtle and tasteful manner. Lang achieves this primarily through editing and the fluid camera style of Fritz Arno Wagner. Near the beginning of the film, for example, Lorre entices a little girl with a balloon; Lang cuts to shots of the girl's worried mother waiting for her return in an apartment; then he cuts to a shot of the balloon floating out and away from a small forest thicket to become entangled in some utility wires, and we know that the child has been murdered. At another point, to establish the identity between the bosses of the local underworld and the police, Lang contrives to have the chief of police complete a gesture begun by the chief of thieves in the previous shot. This persistent equation of authority with criminality, and a brooding sense of destiny, make *M* as much about the crisis of German society at the time it was made as about child murder.

Lang's next film was a sequel to his popular silent thriller about the master criminal Dr. Mabuse, *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* (*Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler*, 1922). In *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse* (*The Last Will of Dr. Mabuse*, 1932), also sumptuously photographed by Wagner, the arch-tyrant directs his league of world crime from a lunatic asylum. Lang later claimed to have modeled Mabuse on Hitler and to have put Nazi slogans into the mouths of his criminal minions. This claim may be the result of hindsight, but the Nazis apparently recognized something of themselves in the film and banned it when they came to power in 1933. After bluntly refusing Joseph Goebbels's offer of an important post with UFA, Lang escaped to France four months later (leaving behind his wife, a devout Nazi), where, in 1934, he adapted Ferenc Molnár's play *Liliom* to the screen for Fox-Europa.

He later emigrated to the United States, where he made two brilliant films before the war. *Fury* (1936), shot at MGM, is a compelling indictment of mob violence that probes as deeply into the complex relationship between will and fate as had Lang's German films. *You Only Live Once* (1937), produced by Walter Wanger for UA, is another powerful tale of injustice and destiny. A young ex-convict is falsely accused of murder and sentenced to death; with his wife's help, he escapes from prison hours before his execution, and together the two flee across America until they are hunted down and killed at a roadblock on the Canadian border. Expressionist in atmosphere, composition, and lighting, *You Only Live Once* later became the model for Joseph Lewis's *Gun Crazy* (1950) and Arthur Penn's


10000 Mk.
Belohnung
Wer ist der Mörder?
Seit Montag, dem 11. Juni ds.
Der Schüler Kurt Klawitzky und
gewesen Müllerstr
Aus verschiedene
ähnlichen
Jahre

(left) The child murderer (Peter Lorre) casts his grim shadow in *M* (Fritz Lang, 1931).

Bonnie and Clyde (1967). The couple's desperate flight through nocturnal America has a tragic, brooding character that both later films preserve.

Lang directed another twenty-one films in the United States for a variety of studios between 1938 and 1956, but only his film noir masterpiece *The Big Heat* (1953, Columbia) achieved the quality and depth of his greatest work. The majority of the others were formulaic but always visually interesting genre films, many of which have long been considered classics of their type. In 1958, Lang returned to Germany to make an exotic two-part costume epic that was poorly received, as was his last effort, *Die 1000 Augen des Dr. Mabuse* (*The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse*, 1960), an updated pastiche of his Mabuse films. Subsequently, Lang retired. He remains today much honored around the world.

The German film industry that Lang left was controlled from 1933 to 1945 by Goebbels, who spent considerable energy banning undesirable and "unhealthy" films, such as *Kameradschaft* and *M*, as *entartete Kunst*, or "degenerate art." Working through the Reich Film Chamber (Reichsfilmkammer, established in July 1933), under the authority of the Reich Cinema Law (Reichslichtspielgesetz, enacted in February 1934), Goebbels mounted a rigorous campaign to rid the industry of its many Jews, but he saw no reason to nationalize the German cinema until well into the war, in 1942. Like leaders of the Soviet Union, Goebbels regarded film as the century's most important communications medium, but unlike them, he was not much concerned with agitprop. Under his regime, Goebbels encouraged German films to remain well made but primarily escapist, because he wished the populace to be entertained rather than enlightened.

The Nazis were in fact quite skilled at manipulating the symbols of popular culture to objectify their ideals. Of the 1,100 to 1,300 features produced under Nazi rule, perhaps less than 25 percent contained overt propaganda. Propaganda as such was confined to newsreels and *Staatsauftragsfilme*—films conceived and financed by the state. These included biographical and historical films of the heroic national past, dramatic films directly adulatory of the Nazi Party, and finally, scurrilous racial propaganda films, such as the infamous *Jud Süss* (*Jew Süss*; Veit Harlan, 1940) and *Der ewige Jude* (*The Eternal Jew*; Fritz Hippler, 1940).

The only great films to emerge from Nazi Germany were two propaganda "documentaries," both personally commissioned by Hitler for the Nazi Party. The first, *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will,* 1935), is a film of nearly mythic dimensions. Assigned to the direction of Leni Riefenstahl (1902–2003) at Hitler's insistence, *Triumph* portrays the 1934 Nazi Party rally at Nuremberg as a quasi-religious, mystical experience. Working with virtually limitless financial resources, thirty cameras and a crew of 120 people, and her own utter ideological commitment, Riefenstahl shot the film in six days with the active cooperation of party leaders. She later wrote, "The preparations for the party congress were made in concert with the preparations for the camera work," but recent studies document that the entire congress was *staged* for her cameras by Hitler's architect Albert Speer and that nothing was left to chance.

It took her eight months to edit the footage, some of it shot after the fact to cover mistakes and continuity gaps, into a powerfully persuasive and visually beautiful piece of propaganda. Hitler is depicted as the new messiah, descending from the clouds in his airplane. Once on earth, he is greeted by the awakening city of Nuremberg and begins a godlike procession to the Kongresshalle (Congress Hall), where the impassioned rhetoric of his followers rings through the chamber. The rest is all pseudo-Wagnerian music composed by



Ferdinand Marian in *Jud Süss* (*Jew Süss*; Veit Harlan, 1940).



Photomontage poster for *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*; Leni Riefenstahl, 1935).

Riefenstahl's career-long collaborator Herbert Windt, monumental Nazi architecture, mass rallies, and torchlight parades choreographed for Riefenstahl's camera. The Führer himself speaks at several points in the pageant but never more forcefully than at its emotional conclusion, where the Nazi ideal of *Blut und Boden* ("blood and soil") is invoked against the backdrop of a gigantic swastika, while SA men (Brown Shirts) in a superimposed low-angle shot seem to march into distant clouds.

Triumph of the Will was effective enough to be banned in Britain, the United States, and Canada, and to become a model for film propaganda among the Allies during the coming war. Hitler was so impressed that he commissioned Riefenstahl to make a spectacular film of the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Again, unlimited resources were placed at her disposal, and her team of cameramen shot 1.5 million feet of film, which took her eighteen months to edit. The completed motion picture was released in two parts as *Olympische Spiele 1936* (*Olympiad/Olympia*) in 1938 with a dynamic score by Windt, and it stands even today as a great testament to athletic achievement. Riefenstahl's innovative use of slow-motion photography and telephoto lenses created images of compelling kinetic beauty, but like *Triumph of the Will*, the film is steeped in the Nazi mystique that makes a cult of sheer physical prowess. Beyond these two powerful and disturbing films, the Nazi cinema produced few films of note, probably because most of the major filmmakers of the Weimar period had been either deported to prison camps or forced into exile.

Italy

Sound came slowly to the Italian cinema because competition from the American and German industries during the 1920s had already pushed it to the brink of collapse. By 1925, from a peak of 150 features in 1919, annual production had fallen to 15 films, most of which were co-productions with other nations. In an effort to combat the "foreign invasion" and revive the

failing domestic industry, the entrepreneur Stefano Pittaluga (1887–1931) founded the Società Anonima Stefano Pittaluga (SASP) in 1926. SASP absorbed the major Italian studios (Cines, Italia, and Palatina) into a private monopoly with government sanction.

In 1927, Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) granted the SASP exclusive distribution rights to the documentaries and the newsreels produced by L'Unione Cinematografica Educativa (whose acronym, LUCE, is Italian for "light"), representing the first major collaboration between the commercial film industry and the Fascist state. It was an SASP subsidiary, Cines-Pittaluga, that produced Italy's first talkie—Gennaro Righelli's *La canzone dell'amore* (*The Song of Love*, 1930); it ultimately provided the basis for the Ente Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche (ENIC), the distribution and exhibition agency through which the Fascists controlled the Italian film industry after 1935.

The earliest Italian sound films were notably undistinguished, with few exceptions. However, the introduction of sound did draw Mussolini's attention to the enormous propaganda value of film, and his regime successfully manipulated the Italian industry during the entire decade by encouraging its expansion and controlling film content. Economic incentives and subsidies caused production to rise annually until it reached eighty-seven features by 1939. As in Nazi Germany, strict Fascist censorship dictated the production of Hollywood-style genre films—mainly, romantic comedies (known as *telefono bianco* or "white telephone" films, owing to their glamorous studio sets) and family melodramas, plus a modicum of nationalist propaganda centered on "heroic" themes from the past.

The Soviet Union

Sound was also slow in coming to the Soviet Union. Although the Soviet engineers P. G. Tager and A. F. Shorin had designed optical systems (variable density and variable area, respectively) as early as 1926–1927, neither was workable until 1929, and only Tager's was adopted by the industry. It is often argued that the Soviets' late start enabled them to profit from the mistakes of their Western counterparts, and it is true, for example, that the Soviet studios never had to struggle with sound-on-disc, which was already obsolete by the time they started sound production. Yet it is also true that the earliest Soviet transitional films were technically inferior to those of the West and clearly suffered from their makers' lack of instruction and experience.

Sound and silent cinema continued to coexist for nearly six years, with the last Soviet silent production being released in 1936, the same year as the first Soviet color film. Sound arrived in the Soviet Union, as it had in Germany, during a period of political reaction. The first of the great purges, in which millions of Soviet citizens as well as government functionaries were imprisoned or executed, began in the late 1920s. Fear and xenophobia were rife, and again, as in Germany, Soviet cinema became increasingly escapist as the government became increasingly repressive. The bold revolutionary experiments of the previous decade were dead. They were replaced by Hollywood-influenced musicals, historical spectacles, and biographies of revolutionary heroes putatively evocative of Stalin. Related to the latter genre were dramatic reconstructions of revolutionary events in the stolid style of socialist realism.

Perhaps the most vital Soviet films of this period were two trilogies. The first, directed by Grigori Kozintsev (1905–1973) and Leonid Trauberg (1902–1990), created a "synthetic biography" of a typical young party worker during the revolutionary period in *The Youth of Maxim* (*Yunost Maksima*, 1935), *The Return of Maxim* (*Vozvrashchenie Maksima*, 1937), and *The Vyborg Side* (*Vyborgskaia storona*, 1939). All three films were shot by the brilliant cinematographer Andrei Moskvin (1901–1961), who would later work closely with Eisenstein.

During most of this period, the man who might have returned Soviet cinema to its former glory remained inactive. Sergei Eisenstein had returned to Moscow from his American sojourn badly discouraged. All of his Paramount projects had been abortive, so in late 1930 he had signed a contract with the Mexican Film Trust, a corporation formed by the American novelist Upton Sinclair (1878–1968) and other investors to produce an Eisenstein film in Mexico. Eisenstein had long been interested in Mexico as both a cultural and a revolutionary phenomenon, and he later wrote that the film he had envisioned would have been "four novels framed by prologue and epilogue, unified in conception and spirit, creating its entity."

The film was provisionally titled *¡Que viva México!* and would have been an attempt to encapsulate revolutionary Mexican history and evoke the spirit of the culture and the land. Eisenstein (working with Grigori Alexandrov and Eduard Tisse) had shot all of the film's sections except the last by 1932, when, as the climax of a series of misunderstandings, Sinclair abruptly ordered



¡Que viva México! (Sergei Eisenstein, 1930–1932; uncompleted and unreleased).

him to abandon the project, claiming correctly that Eisenstein had far exceeded his budget. All of the footage was in Hollywood for processing, and it was never sent back to Eisenstein.

Although Sinclair had promised to ship the negative to Moscow for Eisenstein to edit into a feature film, he eventually turned it over to the independent producer Sol Lesser (1890–1980). Lesser cut parts of one episode into a silent melodrama of revenge titled *Thunder over Mexico* (1933), with a recorded orchestral score by Hugo Riesenfeld. The rest of the footage ultimately found its way into various documentaries about the making of the film and the archives of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

From what is left of it, we can surmise that *¡Que viva México!* might have been Eisenstein's greatest film and the ultimate vindication of his theories of montage. In Moscow again, Eisenstein conceived a number of projects, but they were systematically thwarted by Boris Shumiatski, the head of the Soviet film industry, who with full official sanction began a campaign to discredit Eisenstein and reduce his influence within Soviet cinema. The Stalin government believed that Eisenstein had grown too independent during his American tour and so set a dangerous example for other Soviet artists. In 1935, Eisenstein was publicly insulted at the Congress of Party Film Workers and attacked in the official press. He was also offered projects by Shumiatski that he seemed likely to reject, but the most flagrant abuse committed against him was the suppression of what would have been his first sound film, *Bezhin Meadow* (*Bezhin lug*), which had been approved for production in 1935.

Starting from a short story by the nineteenth-century writer Ivan Turgenev, Eisenstein planned to dramatize the real-life tragedy of a contemporary kulak who killed his son (Pavlik Morozov) for turning informer and for supporting collectivization. Shooting began in the spring of 1935 but was interrupted in September, when Eisenstein fell ill with smallpox. On Eisenstein's return to the set, Shumiatski halted production and published a harsh attack on Eisenstein in *Pravda*; the director himself was forced to publicly recant the film and confess to ideological errors that, in fact, had little to do with its content. This act of self-abasement apparently satisfied the party bureaucrats: a year later, after Shumiatski was deposed and killed, Eisenstein was entrusted with the production

(top right) Teutonic symmetry in *Alexander Nevski* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1938).

(bottom right) Nikolai Cherkasov as Prince Nevski in *Alexander Nevksi* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1938).





of a big-budget historical film of major political importance, *Alexander Nevski* (1938).

On what many observers felt was the eve of a Nazi invasion, Eisenstein was chosen to make a film about how the great Slavic hero Prince Alexander Nevski of Novgorod had rallied the Russian people to repel an invading force of Teutonic Knights in the thirteenth century. It was Eisenstein's first sound film and the consummate realization of his theories of contrapuntal sound. Every shot in *Alexander Nevski* is painstakingly composed in terms of the plastic arrangement of space, mass, and light within the frame. The Teutonic Knights, for example, always appear in strictly geometrical formations, while the Russian ranks are asymmetrical, suggesting the monolithic rigidity of the Germans, as contrasted with the vital but disorganized Russians.

Eisenstein closely supervised the details of the production, including costume design and makeup, and one of his most striking conceptions was the battle dress of the German invaders. Clearly influenced by the sinister headgear of the Ku Klux Klansmen in *The Birth of a Nation*, Eisenstein costumed his Teutonic Knights throughout the film in menacing steel helmets with tiny slits for eyeholes, so that their faces were not visible, unlike those of the Russians. The barbaric military regalia that adorned these helmets, the symbol of the cross on the Knights' white tunics and capes (cleverly positioned to resemble armbands with swastikas), and the atrocities committed on the people of Pskov in the second reel all serve to clearly identify the Teutons with the Nazis.

The film's most impressive sequence is the famous Battle on the Ice on frozen Lake Peipus in northwest Russia, actually shot in the outskirts of Moscow in midsummer with artificial snow and ice. Here, the decisive battle between the Teutons and the Russian defenders is rendered in a spectacular audiovisual montage, complete with **swish pans** and a jolting, rough-and-tumble camera style that would not be seen again until the early days of the French New Wave. Eisenstein appropriately called *Alexander Nevski* "a fugue on the theme of patriotism." Despite the objections of some foreign critics to its operatic structure, the film was an enormous critical and popular success in many Western countries, as well as in the Soviet Union, where it temporarily restored Eisenstein to his position of esteem within the Soviet cinema. (He received both the Order of Lenin and the Stalin Prize for it in 1939 and 1941, respectively.)

Alexander Nevski was discreetly withdrawn from domestic distribution in the wake of the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact of 1939. Shortly thereafter, however, Eisenstein was invited to stage Wagner's opera *Die Walküre* at the Bolshoi Theater to commemorate a state visit by the Nazi propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, "in the mutual interests of German and Russian culture." Eisenstein accepted and produced a remarkable version of the massive Teutonic music drama in which he attempted, as he later wrote, to achieve "a fusion between the elements of Wagner's score and the wash of colors on the stage" through lighting.



Lyudmila Tselikovskaya and Nikolai Cherkasov in *Ivan the Terrible, Part I* (*Ivan Grozny*; Sergei Eisenstein, 1945).

The psychologist of perception was still very much alive in Eisenstein, but he had advanced from reflexology to synesthesia. And just as he had used the Proletkult Theater as a testing ground for his developing theories of montage, he used his 1940 production of Wagner's opera as a laboratory for his new ideas on the dramatic interplay of sound, space, and color, so important to his last two films.

Sometime in 1940, Eisenstein conceived the notion of making an epic film trilogy about the life of Tsar Ivan IV, known in Russian as *grozny* ("awesome," "terrible"), the Nevski-like figure who had first unified much of Russia in the sixteenth century. This project was to be the consummation of all of his theory and practice, and Eisenstein spent two full years studying his subject. Production began simultaneously on all three films at the Alma-Ata studios in Central Asia in 1943. (Soviet motion-picture studios and equipment factories near the invasion front were evacuated eastward with their personnel after June 1941.)

Instead of a shooting script, Eisenstein used a series of his own sketches as his scenario. *Ivan the Terrible* (*Ivan Grozny*), *Part I*, was completed and released in early 1945, and it immediately won the Stalin Prize for artistic achievement. *Part II*, *The Boyars' Plot* (*Boyarskii zagovor*), completed in Moscow between 1945 and 1946, was previewed in August 1946 and promptly banned by the Party Central Committee for "ignorance in the presentation of historical fact." (Eisenstein had apparently been too critical of the *oprichniki*, Ivan's political police, for Stalin's paranoid taste.) When this happened, Eisenstein was in the hospital recovering from a heart attack, and the four completed reels of *Part III* were surreptitiously confiscated and destroyed. In February 1947, Eisenstein bargained personally with Stalin for alterations that would permit *Part II*'s distribution, but

he never regained his health sufficiently to make them. Eisenstein wrote his memoirs, dreamed of adapting *War and Peace*, and died at the age of fifty, on February 11, 1948, only a few months before the death of D. W. Griffith.

His last bequest to the cinema was a two-part film of incomparable formal beauty. *Ivan the Terrible, Parts I* and *II*, is quintessentially a film whose meaning is its design. The montage aesthetics of the great silent films are subordinated here, like all other plastic elements, to elaborate compositions within the frame photographed by Tisse (exteriors) and Moskvin (interiors), in which even the actors become part of the decor (much as they were part of the montage patterns of the silent films). Eisenstein demanded highly expressive and even contorted performances from his actors—especially from Nikolai Cherkasov (1903–1966), in the role of Ivan (he had also played Nevski)—and achieved a mise-en-scène whose hieratic stylization is deliberately reminiscent of the work of the sixteenth-century painter El Greco. Like *Alexander Nevski*, *Ivan the Terrible* is an operatic film with a magnificent Prokofiev score employed contrapuntally throughout. Furthermore, in his quest for synesthesia and total sensory saturation, Eisenstein even used a red-tinted color sequence (his first—made with Agfacolor stock captured from the Germans) in *Part II* to create a certain emotional tonality for a wild dance of the *oprichniki*.

Ivan the Terrible may seem a strange ending to a career that began with *Strike* and *Potemkin*. It is heavy, ornate, and static where they are light and fast. Yet ultimately, all of Eisenstein's films are cut from the same cloth. His devotion to pictorial beauty, his fascination with the psychology of perception, and his epic aspirations pervade everything he undertook. If Eisenstein turned from agitprop to grand opera in his later years, it was perhaps because, after nearly two decades of bitter experience under the Stalin regime, he no longer believed in any cause beyond the nobility and necessity of art.

France

Avant-Garde Impressionism, 1921–1929

Next to America's, the film industry with the most prominent national image in the 1930s was that of France. After World War I, Paris had become the center of an international avant-garde encompassing cubism, **surrealism**, dadaism, and futurism, and many intellectuals involved with these movements had become intensely interested in the possibilities of film to embody dream states and to express modernist conceptions of time and space. The most prominent among them was the young author and editor Louis Delluc (1890–1924), who founded the journal *Cinéma* and became, long before Eisenstein, the first aesthetic theorist of the film. Delluc's practical mission was the founding of a truly French national cinema that would be authentically cinematic. To this end, he rejected much of French cinema as it had evolved before the war—especially the theatrical abuses of *film d'art*—and turned instead to the models of Sweden (Sjöström and Stiller), America (Chaplin, Ince, and Griffith), and Germany (Expressionism and *Kammerspiel*). Delluc began to write original scenarios and gathered about him a group of young filmmakers who became known as the French "impressionist" school, or the "first avant-garde"—Germaine Dulac, Jean Epstein, Marcel L'Herbier, and Abel Gance. Delluc himself directed a handful of important films, including *Fièvre* (*Fever*, 1921) and *La femme de nulle part* (*The Woman from Nowhere*, 1922), both of which are reminiscent of *Kammerspiel* in their concern with creating atmosphere and preserving the unities of time and place.

Germaine Dulac (1882–1942), one of cinema's first female artists, directed Delluc's first scenario, *La fête espagnole* (*The Spanish Festival*, 1920), and went on to become an important figure in the avant-garde and documentary cinema. Her most significant impressionist films were short, forty-minute features: *La souriante madame Beudet* (*The Smiling Madame Beudet*, 1923), an intimate psychological portrait of middle-class marriage in a drab provincial setting, adapted from the play by avant-gardists André Obey and Denys Amiel, and *La coquille et le clergyman* (*The Seashell and the Clergyman*, 1928), a surrealist exposition of sexual repression from a scenario by Antonin Artaud. *La souriante madame Beudet* employs a minimal storyline as an armature for the subjective camera, which is used to convey the interiority not only of its main character, but of others as well (and predates the subjective camera of Murnau's *Der letzte Mann* by at least a year). *The Seashell and the Clergyman* is arguably the first surrealist feature, constructed entirely on dream logic and the materialization of unconscious processes, which links it more closely with the "second" avant-garde than with impressionism.

Jean Epstein (1897–1953), like Delluc, began his career in film as a theorist but contributed a major work to impressionist cinema in 1923 with *Coeur fidèle* (*Faithful Heart*), the story of a working-class



Philippe Hériat and Ève Francis in *El Dorado* (Marcel L'Herbier, 1921).

love triangle in Marseilles with a fine feeling for landscape and atmosphere that is nevertheless boldly experimental in form. Epstein's later *La chute de la maison Usher* (*The Fall of the House of Usher*, 1928) used a variety of brilliant technical effects to create for this Edgar Allan Poe tale what Henri Langlois called "the cinematic equivalent of Debussy," while his *Finis terrae* (*Land's End*, 1929), shot on location at Land's End in Brittany, was an avant-garde forecast of neorealism.

The most faithful follower of Delluc's theories was Marcel L'Herbier (1890–1979), who had been a prominent symbolist poet before turning to filmmaking in 1917. The most cerebral member of the impressionist group, L'Herbier was concerned largely with abstract form and with the use of visual effects to express inner states. His *L'homme du large* (*The Big Man*, 1920) was an adaptation of a short story by the nineteenth-century realist Honoré de Balzac, shot on location on the southern coast of Brittany, whose frames were composed to resemble impressionist paintings. The visual texture of *El Dorado* (1921), a melodrama of Spanish lowlife set in a cabaret, recalls the paintings of Claude Monet and virtually synthesizes early avant-garde technique, while *Don Juan et Faust* (*Don Juan and Faust*, 1922) used cubism to the same end. L'Herbier's most extravagant impressionist film, *L'inhumaine* (*The Inhuman Woman*, 1924), with a score by Darius Milhaud and sets by the cubist painter Fernand Léger and Robert Mallet-Stevens, was an essay in visual abstraction thinly disguised as science fiction; it ends with an apocalyptic montage sequence designed to synthesize movement, music, sound, and color. Yet *L'argent* (1929)—a spectacular updating of Zola's 1891 novel about stock-market manipulation during the Second Empire (c. 1868)—is widely regarded today as L'Herbier's greatest film. In it, he employed anti-traditional camera and editing strategies to create a destabilized narrative space within a series of immense, streamlined studio sets designed by André Barsacq and Lazare Meerson, providing both

an image and a critique of unbridled capitalism on the brink of the Great Depression.

Abel Gance (1889–1981), like Erich von Stroheim, was one of the great maverick talents of the cinema, and his affiliation with the impressionists was fleeting at best. Born into a bourgeois family, Gance had been a poet, an actor, and a scriptwriter before forming his own production company in 1911. Despite some impressive experimental work, Gance did not achieve fame until the success of his beautifully photographed melodramas *Mater Dolorosa* (1917) and *La dixième symphonie* (*The Tenth Symphony*, 1918). Then he struck out on his own to pursue a dual obsession with technical innovation and epic form. Deeply influenced by *Intolerance*, Gance practiced complex metaphorical intercutting in his symbolic antiwar narrative *J'accuse!* (*I Accuse!*, 1919), and then contributed the extraordinary modern epic *La roue* (*The Wheel*, 1922–1923) to the impressionist movement.

La roue tells the tragic story of an engine driver and his son, who are both in love with the same woman—their adopted daughter and sister, respectively—and deliberately resonates with the myths of Oedipus, Sisyphus, Prometheus, and Christ. Like von Stroheim's *Greed* (1924), the film was intended for release in a nine-hour version but was cut by Gance at the request of its producer (Charles Pathé) to two and a half hours. *La roue* also attracted the intense admiration of Griffith, to whom Gance had shown *J'accuse!* during a visit to the United States in 1921. *La roue*, whose editing clearly owes much to the contact with Griffith, was originally thirty-two reels long and divided into a prologue and three parts; Gance cut the general-release version to fourteen, and re-releases have reduced it even further. Even in the shortened version, *La roue* influenced a whole generation of French avant-garde filmmakers, including Fernand Léger and Jean Cocteau, and its editing was widely studied in Soviet film schools during the 1920s.

Gance's next film, *Napoléon vu par Abel Gance: Première époque: Bonaparte* (*Napoleon as Seen by Abel Gance: First Part: Bonaparte*, 1927), was produced by the Société Génerale des Films and financed largely by Russian émigré funds. It stands today with *Intolerance* (1916) and *Greed* (1924) as one of the great eccentric masterpieces of the silent cinema. Twenty-eight reels in its original version but reduced to eight by subsequent distributors, *Napoléon* required four years to produce and was only the first part of a projected six-part film of the life of Bonaparte (strikingly played by Albert Dieudonné) that was never completed. As it stands, it covers his youth, the revolution, and the opening of the Italian campaign, and there is scarcely a passage in the film that does not make use of some innovative and original device.



Séverin-Mars in *La roue* (*The Wheel*; Abel Gance, 1923).

From beginning to end, Gance assaulted his audience with the entire arsenal of silent-screen techniques, and the effect is impressive. As in *La roue*, he used sophisticated metaphorical intercutting to inundate the viewer with significant images, many of them lasting only a few frames, and at times he superimposed as many as sixteen simultaneous images on the screen. At several points in *Napoléon*, Gance also used a widescreen process called Polyvision, which expanded the frame to three times its normal width, but the most original achievement of *Napoléon* was the astonishing fluidity of its camera work.

The manufacture in France of lightweight, portable cameras (specifically, the Debrie Photociné Sept) made possible many extraordinary subjective camera shots and traveling shots that went far beyond the pioneering work of Murnau and Freund in *Der letzte Mann* (1924) and that would not be seen again until the advent of the handheld 35mm sound camera some twenty-five years later. In the Corsican sequence, for example, the camera was strapped to the back of a galloping horse to shoot the landscape as it would have been seen by the rider. Later, encased in a waterproof box, the camera was hurled from a steep cliff into the Mediterranean to approximate the impressions of Napoleon as he dived. To film the tumultuous Paris Convention, Gance mounted the camera on a huge pendulum to convey the radical swaying back and forth between Girondist and Jacobin factions, and he intercut this shot with one of Napoleon's boat on its way to France, pitching to and fro in a storm



Albert Dieudonné in *Napoléon vu par Abel Gance: Première époque: Bonaparte* (*Napoleon as Seen by Abel Gance: First Part: Bonaparte*; Abel Gance, 1927): Polyvision triptych.

at sea. Finally, in scenes from the siege of Toulon, a small camera was even mounted in a football and tossed into the air to simulate the perspective of a cannonball.

The Polyvision process, conceived by Gance specifically for *Napoléon* and designed by camera pioneer André Debrie, anticipated the modern Cinerama process in that it employed a triptych, or three-panel screen, to show three standard 35mm images side by side. Gance used the process in two distinct ways. Often, he would supplement the primary image on the middle screen with complementary and/or contrapuntal images on either side to achieve a kind of lateral montage within the frame. At several points during the Italian campaign, for instance, huge close-ups of Bonaparte's head or of a symbolic eagle dominate the middle screen, while marching troops of the Grande Armée stream across the side panels. At other times, Gance used Polyvision more naturalistically to explode the screen into a single vast panoramic image for mass scenes, as during the Italian campaign and the Convention. This image was photographed by three identical Parvo-Debrie cameras, mounted one on top of the other in an arc and synchronized to run concurrently by means of a flexible motor shaft. Like so many other elements of *Napoléon*, Polyvision was twenty-five years ahead of its time (and, by his own admission, it inspired Professor Henri Chrétien, the father of modern widescreen processes, to perfect the **anamorphic lens** in 1941).

Gance made nothing comparable to *Napoléon* for the rest of his career, although he constantly returned to it, adding stereophonic sound for Arthur Honegger's original score, some dialogue scenes, and as late as 1971, re-editing it in a four-hour version with new footage as *Bonaparte et la révolution*. Yet audiences in only eight European cities saw *Napoléon* in its original form, which, of course, included a full range of tints and tones, with the triptych screen becoming an enormous blue, white, and red tricolor at the film's stirring conclusion. It was cut to less than one-third of its length for overseas distribution, and there was no definitive print of the original silent film until a Herculean task of restoration was performed by the British filmmaker and film historian Kevin Brownlow (b. 1938) in 1979. A seventeen-reel reconstruction by the Cinémathèque Française excited the passionate admiration of the young *cinéastes* of the French New Wave when it was shown in Paris in the late 1950s and contributed substantially to a resurrection of Gance's critical reputation.

The "Second" Avant-Garde

Louis Delluc died of tuberculosis in 1924, and the French impressionist film entered a period of decadent formalism shortly thereafter, but in the rise of serious French film criticism and the *ciné-club* (film society) movement, Delluc's influence survived him and the school he founded. By the mid-1920s, film reviews had become a standard feature of almost every newspaper published in France. Professional film writers such as Léon Moussinac (1890–1964) were establishing a tradition of cinema studies in France that was to make that country the home of the most advanced and subtle thinking on film from 1925 through the present.

The *ciné-club* movement was founded by Delluc, Moussinac, Germaine Dulac, and Ricciotto Canudo (1879–1923) in Paris, where it achieved great success and spread rapidly to the provinces. Some *ciné-clubs* ultimately became specialized film theaters, where a knowledgeable public could see serious films unavailable to it

in conventional cinemas. Since French commercial film production reached a new low point during the 1920s, both financially and aesthetically, it was largely these specialized theaters and *ciné-clubs* that kept the creative tradition of French cinema alive and that ushered it into the sound era by enabling a second wave of French avant-garde filmmakers to find an audience.

The "second" avant-garde had its roots in the literary and artistic movements of dadaism and surrealism. Like the impressionists, the members of these later groups represented the first generation to "think spontaneously in animated images," as Émile Vuillermoz put it in a contemporary review of Gance's *La roue*. Unlike the impressionists, however, they wished to create a pure cinema of visual sensation completely divorced from conventional narrative—or, as they put it in their manifestos, to make films without subjects. A year later, the cubist painter Fernand Léger and his American technical collaborator Dudley Murphy produced *Ballet mécanique*, in which isolated objects, pieces of machinery, posters, and newspaper headlines were animated into a rhythmic ballet of plastic forms.

The most famous of the early avant-garde films was undisputedly René Clair's *Entr'acte* (1924), made to be shown at the intermission of Francis Picabia's dadaist ballet *Relâche* (*Performance Suspended*). With a score by Erik Satie, who also wrote the music for the ballet, *Entr'acte* was a logically meaningless succession of outrageous images, many derived from the tradition of the Pathé/Gaumont *course comique* and the serials of Feuillade. Clair's *Paris qui dort* (English title: *The Crazy Ray*, 1924) was an irreverent but lyrical nonstory of a mad scientist who invents an invisible ray to immobilize all of Paris, except for six people who eventually take up residence in the Eiffel Tower. Clair went on to become a major figure in the sound film, as did the Spanish-born director Luis Buñuel (1900–1983), whose *Un chien andalou* (*An Andalusian Dog*, 1929) represents the avant-garde at its most mature, most surreal, and most Freudian.

Written in collaboration with the surrealist painter Salvador Dalí (1904–1989), *Un chien andalou* provides a seemingly incoherent stream of brutal, erotic images from the unconscious that Buñuel called "a despairing,



Simone Mareuil in *Un chien andalou* (*An Andalusian Dog*; Luis Buñuel, 1929).

passionate call to murder." In the course of the film, we witness in close-up a woman's eyeball being slashed in two with a razor, a man in full harness pulling two grand pianos on which are draped the rotting carcasses of two donkeys, swarms of ants crawling from a hole in a man's palm, and a whole succession of gratuitous murders, severed limbs, and symbolic sexual transformations. Designed to create a series of violent antagonisms within the viewer through shock, titillation, and repulsion, the film nevertheless has a formal logic based on deconstruction of continuity and association of images through graphic match. *Un chien andalou* is the prototype of film surrealism, yet Buñuel later added a recorded score comprising popular contemporary tangos and the "Liebestod" from Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*, as if to suggest that *Un chien andalou* was as much about the collapse of European culture between the wars as a subterranean voyage through the recesses of the unconscious mind.

During this same period, Jean Painlevé (1902–1989) began to produce the series of beautiful nature films that culminated in *L'hippocampe* (1934), a poetic documentary on the life cycle of the seahorse. A bit later, Luis Buñuel combined surrealism with social commitment in the powerful and subversive *Las hurdes* (English title: *Land without Bread*, 1932), which depicts the degradation, misery, and ignorance of the denizens of Spain's poorest district in the coolly ironic tones of a conventional travelogue. Yet the indisputable masterpiece of the French avant-garde documentary movement was the first film of Jean Vigo (1905–1934), *À propos de Nice* (1929). Vigo used the "cinema-eye" techniques of Dziga Vertov—whose brother Boris Kaufman was Vigo's cameraman—to create a lyrical but angry polemic against bourgeois decadence in a fashionable resort town.

The general bleakness of French commercial cinema during this period of widespread independent experimentation was illuminated here and there by the films of Jacques Feyder, René Clair, and Carl Theodor Dreyer. Feyder (b. Jacques Frédérix, in Brussels, 1885–1948) was a Belgian who made dozens of French commercial films before establishing his reputation with *L'Atlantide* (1921), an opulent tale of the lost continent of Atlantis with exteriors shot in the Sahara desert. His critical and popular success continued through *Crainquebille* (1922), a semi-impressionistic version of the novel by Anatole France, which was much admired by Griffith, and a highly praised adaptation of Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* (1929), which has not survived. René Clair had turned from the avant-garde to commercial cinema in 1925 but did not achieve artistic success until he made the delightful *Un chapeau de paille d'Italie* (*An Italian Straw Hat*, 1928) and *Les deux timides* (*Two Timid Souls*, 1928), which transformed popular nineteenth-century farces by Eugène Labiche into highly cinematic comic chase films in the manner of Mack Sennett and Jean Durand.

Clair's art director for the remarkable series of films from *Un chapeau de paille d'Italie* through *Quatorze Juillet* (1932) was the brilliant Lazare Meerson (1900–1938), who more than any other single individual helped create the style of "poetic realism." In his studio-built street scenes for Clair and, later, for Feyder, Meerson turned away from Expressionism, impressionism, and naturalism to create an ambiance described by Georges Sadoul as "simultaneously realistic and poetic." In addition to being one of the greatest designers in the history of European cinema, Meerson trained a group of young assistants who became important figures in their own right (most notably, Alexandre Trauner [1906–1993]), and his influence was felt well into the 1960s.

Carl Theodor Dreyer (1889–1968) is an important director whose most significant body of work lies outside the mainstream of film history. Because of its simplicity and austerity, Dreyer's art has been called religious and his style "transcendental." Originally a journalist and a scriptwriter for Danish Nordisk, Dreyer began by making films in direct imitation of Griffith. Yet by the late 1920s, he was making films of such an extraordinary character as to defy classification.

The Danish director made his late silent masterpiece *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (*The Passion of Joan of Arc*, 1928) for the Société Générale des Films (SGF) in Paris between 1927 and 1928. This austere and anguished film, which condenses the trial, torture, and execution of St. Joan (Maria Falconetti, 1892–1946) into a single tension-charged twenty-four-hour period, was based on actual trial records and shot in sequence, largely in extreme close-ups against stark white backgrounds, to enhance its psychological realism. To the same end, Dreyer and his chief cameraman, Rudolph Maté (1898–1964), chose to photograph the film on newly available low-contrast panchromatic stock, and the actors and the actresses were forbidden to wear makeup.

Dreyer had intended to make *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* a sound film, but he abandoned the notion for lack of equipment, so the film remains the last great classic of the international silent screen. The film is also a

(right) Maria Falconetti in *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (*The Passion of Joan of Arc*; Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1928).



radical formal experiment whose strategy is to subvert the classical stylistic relationships between narrative logic and cinematic space in order to construct a formal space for the sacred (that of Joan) untouched by the space of the profane (that of her inquisitors).

Dreyer also made his first sound film in France, the hauntingly atmospheric *Vampyr* (1932), shot by Maté on location in the village of Courtempierre. Designed, like *La passion*, by Hermann Warm, who had also designed the sets for *Caligari, Der müde Tod*, and other Expressionist works, *Vampyr* seems less distinctly Gallic than *La passion*, perhaps because its sound track was post-recorded in Berlin.

Sound, 1929–1934

The coming of sound spelled the end for French experimental avant-garde cinema. Production costs soared with the introduction of sound, because France, unlike the United States and Germany, possessed no patents for the new process. Thus, French studios were at the mercy of Western Electric and Tobis-Klangfilm, both of which exacted crippling sums for the rights to use their sound equipment. Yet the success of American and German sound films in France was such that financiers were eager to invest in the foreign patent rights.

Hollywood and Tobis attempted to plunder the French industry further by establishing huge production facilities in the suburbs of Paris. Paramount built a vast plant at Joinville, but the quality of its mass-produced multilingual films fell to such a low level that the facility eventually became a dubbing studio for American-made films. The Tobis operation in Epinay was a much more respectable affair; its very first production was a motion picture praised around the world as the first artistic triumph of the sound film: René Clair's *Sous les toits de Paris* (*Under the Roofs of Paris*, 1930).

As with several other French directors making the transition to sound, Clair's involvement with the avant-garde of the 1920s had predisposed him to experiment with the new process. *Sous les toits de Paris* was a brisk musical comedy about ordinary





Zéro de conduite (*Zero for Conduct*; Jean Vigo, 1933).

people set in a delightfully designed Parisian *faubourg* (residential district); it used a bare minimum of dialogue and vindicated Clair's own theoretical defense of asynchronous or contrapuntal sound. His next Tobis film was another ebullient musical comedy, *Le million* (*The Million*, 1931), which employed a whole range of nonnaturalistic effects on the sound track and a wild chase through an opera house to create what many historians feel is the best European musical comedy of the period between the wars.

With *À nous la liberté* (*Liberty Is Ours*, 1931), Clair turned to the more serious themes of industrialization and economic depression, still, however, using the musical-comedy form. Based loosely on the life of Charles Pathé, the film tells the story of an escaped convict who becomes a fabulously wealthy industrialist. He is subsequently discovered and blackmailed by a prison buddy, but in the utopian conclusion, he gives up his role as a captain of industry to become a happy vagabond. The buoyant wit of this film, its great visual precision, and its brilliant use of asynchronous sound have made it a classic. *À nous la liberté* shares many similarities with Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1935)—so many, in fact, that Tobis pressed Clair to sue Chaplin for copyright infringement after the latter film's release. Clair declined, saying that he could only be honored to have inspired so great a filmmaker as Chaplin.

(left) *Sous les toits de Paris* (*Under the Roofs of Paris*; René Clair, 1930).

Another important figure of the early sound film in France, although his total output amounts to little more than three hours of viewing time, was Jean Vigo. The son of a famous anarchist who was jailed and probably murdered by the French government during World War I, Vigo spent his youth as an orphan in a series of wretched boarding schools. He later became an assistant cameraman and met one of Dziga Vertov's brothers, the cameraman Boris Kaufman, with whom he made his first feature: the forty-five-minute masterpiece *Zéro de conduite* (*Zero for Conduct*, 1933). This

much admired film concerns the revolt of the boys of a rundown provincial boarding school against their petty, mean-spirited teachers; it is autobiographical in its anarchic spirit and many of its specific details. The film is simultaneously lyrical, surrealistic, comical, and profoundly serious. Important sequences include the balletic, slow-motion pillow fight during the dormitory rebellion in which feathers swirl about the room like snowflakes in a blizzard; the official visit of the school's inspector—a little person wearing a top hat; and the final assault on the courtyard in which the boys stand on the school roof and bombard dignitaries at a pompous assembly with rubbish.

By pitting the free and rebellious spirit of the children against the bourgeois repressiveness of the adults, Vigo was sounding a classical anarchist theme, and French authorities acknowledged this by banning *Zéro de conduite* from public viewing until the Liberation in 1944. This intensely personal film, with its subtle blend of poetry, fantasy, and realism, has had a great impact on succeeding generations of directors, especially on French New Wave filmmakers such as François Truffaut. Both Truffaut's *Les quatre cents coups* (*The Four Hundred Blows*, 1959) and the British director Lindsay Anderson's *If . . .* (1968), for example, owe a great deal to it in terms of structure, style, and theme.

Poetic Realism, 1934–1940

The character of French production during the 1920s had been artisanal and craftlike—a large number of small studios leased their facilities to independent companies, often formed to produce single films—while the French exhibition system was, on the whole, familial and independent. This arrangement had lent itself readily to experimentation, encouraging the great work of the narrative avant-garde previously discussed, but it left producers and exhibitors alike vulnerable to the highly organized distribution networks of the Americans and the Germans. In the face of this threat, the French film industry regrouped itself into two mammoth consortia around the former giants of the 1910s: Pathé and Gaumont. In February 1929, producer Bernard Natan bought a controlling interest in Pathé-Cinema, Pathé-Consortium, and the Lutetia cinema chain to form a huge production/distribution/exhibition conglomerate called Pathé-Natan.

That same summer, the Franco-Film consortium bought the Aubert cinema chain and was itself absorbed a year later by Gaumont, with the backing of the Swiss electrical industry, to form Gaumont-Franco-Film-Aubert (GFFA). It seemed briefly that the French film industry had reconstituted its pre–World War I glory and approached the condition of the American film industry circa 1921. However, the appearance was false; within five years, both companies were bankrupted through mismanagement and fraud.

Except for the work of Clair and Vigo, French cinema of the early sound era was not in good health, either aesthetically or financially, and in 1934—the year of Clair's departure for England and Vigo's death—the industry experienced a major economic crisis. In that year, because of worldwide depression and internal mismanagement, domestic production fell off significantly, Gaumont and Pathé collapsed, and the end of French cinema was widely prophesied.

Instead, French cinema entered its period of greatest creative growth soon afterward. The fall of the studio combines necessitated a return to the system of independent production that had prevailed before the coming of sound, at a time when sound itself had stimulated an unprecedented demand for French-language films on French themes. The figures tell the tale: between 1928 and 1938, French production nearly doubled, from 66 to 122 features annually; box-office receipts increased to the point that the French audience was considered second in strength only to the American, and far ahead of those of the USSR, the United Kingdom, and Germany; by 1937–1938, French cinema had become the most critically acclaimed in the world, winning prizes and leading export markets in every industrial country, including the United States.

The predominant style of this period (1934–1940) has been characterized by Georges Sadoul as "poetic realism"—a blend of lyricism and realism that derives from "the influence of literary naturalism and Zola, certain traditions of Zecca, Feuillade, and Delluc, certain lessons also from René Clair and Jean Vigo." Poetic realism seems to have had two phases—one born of the optimism created by the Popular Front movement of 1935–1937, the other a product of the despair created by the movement's failure and the realization that fascism in some form was at hand. The same directors and scriptwriters contributed films to both phases. (The Popular Front was a coalition of all the parties of the Left, including the Communists, who banded together against Fascism in 1935; never very sound, the alliance collapsed in 1937, overthrown by a coalition of rightist and centrist parties.)

Among the first practitioners of poetic realism was Jacques Feyder, who made his most important films



La kermesse héroïque (English title: *Carnival in Flanders*; Jacques Feyder, 1935).

of the period in collaboration with the art director Lazare Meerson and Charles Spaak (1903–1975), the screenwriter who, with Jacques Prévert (1900–1977), contributed most to the development of poetic realism. Together, Feyder and Spaak produced *Le grand jeu* (*The Great Game,* 1934), a brooding melodrama of life in the Foreign Legion; *Pension mimosas* (1935), a grim, naturalistic drama of gambling in high society and low that provided the foundation for poetic realism as practiced later by Feyder's assistant Marcel Carné; and the beautiful costume film *La kermesse héroïque* (English title: *Carnival in Flanders,* 1935), set in sixteenth-century Flanders, with a mise-en-scène based on the paintings of the great Flemish masters.

During this same period, Spaak also wrote successfully for Julien Duvivier (1896–1967), a prolific director of commercial films who did his best work under the influence of poetic realism. Together, Duvivier and Spaak produced *La bandera* (English title: *Escape from Yesterday*, 1935), the story of a criminal seeking refuge in the Foreign Legion, and *La belle équipe* (English title: *They Were Five*, 1936), in which five unemployed Parisian workers make a cooperative effort to open a restaurant on the banks of the Marne. Both films starred Jean Gabin (1904–1976), who later became the archetype of the doomed modern hero in Duvivier's internationally successful *Pépé le moko* (1937). Written by Henri Jeanson (and influenced by Howard Hawks's 1932 film *Scarface* and other American gangster films), *Pépé le moko* is about a Parisian gangster (Gabin) hiding out with his gang in the Casbah in Algiers, while the police wait outside for the move that will betray him. The love of a woman draws Pépé out of his sanctuary, and he is gunned down by the police. As a genre film, *Pépé le moko* can compete with the very best of the Hollywood gangster cycle, but in its muted violence and fatalism, it is highly representative of the pessimistic side of poetic realism.

The greatest exponent of this darker aspect of poetic realism was the young Marcel Carné, who had made the



Quai des brumes (*Port of Shadows*; Marcel Carné, 1938).

avant-garde documentary *Nogent, Eldorado du dimanche* in 1929 and had begun his career in the sound film as an assistant to Feyder. Carné's great collaborator was the surrealist poet Jacques Prévert, with whom he produced a series of films in the late 1930s that incarnates the romantic pessimism of the French cinema in the latter part of its great creative decade. Influenced by the films of von Sternberg and the German tradition of *Kammerspiel*, *Quai des brumes* (*Port of Shadows*, 1938) deals with a deserter from the colonial army (Jean Gabin) who finds himself trapped in the port of Le Havre. Like Pépé le Moko, he becomes involved with the underworld and is doomed to die through his love for a woman.

Photographed entirely in the studio by Eugen Schüfftan, with art direction by Alexandre Trauner and music by Maurice Jaubert, *Quai des brumes* is an ominously gloomy film. It exudes such a pervasive sense of fatality that a spokesman for the collaborationist Vichy government later declared, "If we have lost the war, it is because of *Quai des brumes*" (Carné replied that the barometer shouldn't be blamed for the storm.)

In the Carné–Prévert film *Le jour se lève* (*Daybreak*, 1939), released just before the war, a man (Gabin) commits murder and locks himself in an attic room to await the inevitable police assault at dawn. During the night (in what is perhaps the most structurally perfect flashback ever filmed), he remembers the love affair that led to his crime, and at daybreak, he commits suicide. Simultaneously metaphysical and realistic, *Le jour se lève* exploits the metaphor of a decent man irreversibly trapped by fate more persuasively and powerfully than any other French film of the period, and it had enormous influence abroad during the war, even though it was banned in Nazi-occupied Europe.

During the Occupation, the Carné–Prévert association produced two of the most spectacular films ever made in France. *Les visiteurs du soir* (English title: *The Devil's Envoys*, 1942), an adaptation of a medieval legend about a failed attempt by the devil to intervene in



Arletty and Alain Cuny in *Les visiteurs du soir* (English title: *The Devil's Envoys*; Marcel Carné, 1942).

a human love affair, provided a stunning re-creation of fifteenth-century France. (Carné and Prévert intended the devil in the film to represent Hitler, but the allusions were necessarily so indirect as to be unrecognizable.) *Les enfants du paradis* (*Children of Paradise*, 1945), more than three hours long, evoked the world of the nineteenth-century theater. Inspired by the great French novelists of that era, the film explores the classic theme of the relationship between life and art and, more specifically, between reality, cinema, and theater, in the context of a complicated love affair between a beautiful woman and a famous professional mime. Elaborate, intelligent, superbly acted, and beautifully mounted, *Les enfants du paradis* has become a classic of French cinema. It is clearly Carné and Prévert's masterpiece, and although they collaborated several times more after the war, they never again produced a work equal to this one.

Jean Renoir

By far the greatest and most influential director to emerge from French poetic realism was Jean Renoir (1894–1979). Son of the impressionist painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919), he began his career in cinema with an uneven series of eight silent films. It was not until the coming of sound that he began to distinguish himself as an artist. His first sound film was *On purge bébé* (*Purging the Baby*, 1931), adapted from a play by Georges Feydeau and starring Renoir's frequent collaborator during this period, Michel Simon (1895–1975). This relatively trivial domestic comedy was nevertheless a great commercial success and permitted Renoir to make his first important sound film, *La chienne* (*The Bitch*, 1931), a year later. This melodrama of a middle-class bank clerk and Sunday painter (Simon) who has an affair with a prostitute and later kills her for deceiving him owed much to the example of von Sternberg's *Der blaue Engel* (1929), and it achieved a degree of social realism in evoking its milieu, which exceeded even that of its German predecessor.

After the suspenseful detective film *La nuit de carrefour* (*Night at the Crossroads*, 1932), adapted from a work by Georges Simenon, and the lightweight comedy *Chotard et cie* (*Chotard and Company*, 1932), Renoir once again returned to the theme of *La chienne*—pitting bourgeois life against the anarchic values of a tramp—in *Boudu sauvé des eaux* (*Boudu Saved from Drowning*, 1932). In this film, a respectable Parisian book dealer saves a seedy vagabond, Boudu (Michel Simon), from drowning in the Seine and insists that Boudu move in with him. After seducing both the wife and the mistress of his benefactor, and generally wreaking havoc on the household, Boudu leaves happily to resume his wanderings.

Produced independently with complete creative freedom, *Boudu*, like *La chienne*, was a commercial failure. Renoir's next film was a fine adaptation of Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1934), in which he attempted to translate the novel's symbolic substructure into cinematic terms. Originally more than three and a half hours long but cut to two hours by its distributors, *Madame Bovary* was another commercial failure. Fortunately, Renoir was given a chance the following year to undertake a much-cherished project by producer Marcel Pagnol. This was *Toni* (1935), a story of Italian immigrant workers in the quarries of southern France. Shot entirely on location and making extensive use of nonactors, *Toni* harks back to Soviet realism and is a forerunner of Italian neorealism.

After this attempt to make a film, in Renoir's words, "as close as possible to a documentary," Renoir entered into his only collaboration with the scriptwriter Jacques Prévert; the resulting film marks a major turning point in his work. Shot during the great electoral triumphs of the Popular Front in 1935, *Le crime de Monsieur Lange* (*The Crime of Monsieur Lange*, 1936) is in many ways a political parable of the need for collective action in the face of capitalist corruption. The employees of a publishing house form a cooperative to run the business after they learn of the apparent death of their lecherous and exploitative boss. The co-op experiences great success until the boss unexpectedly



Toni (Jean Renoir, 1935).

returns to claim his business. One of the workers, a writer of Wild West serials named M. Lange, whose name is a pun on the French *l'ange* (angel), shoots him and flees the country for freedom.

Shot largely on a single set representing the courtyard of a Parisian working-class tenement, *Le crime de monsieur Lange* announced the new spirit of social commitment that would pervade Renoir's work through his last prewar films. The strength of this commitment was demonstrated in *La vie est à nous* (*Life Is Ours/People of France*, 1936), an election propaganda film for the French Communist Party that mixes newsreel footage with dramatic episodes to show the necessity of presenting a united front against Fascism.

Renoir's next two films were literary adaptations. *Une partie de campagne* (*A Day in the Country*) was a version of a Guy de Maupassant short story shot in 1936, but not edited and released until 1946. The pictorial quality of the film—its unique feeling for landscape and nature—is reminiscent of the paintings of Renoir's father and his fellow impressionists Manet, Monet, and Degas. Renoir's other adaptation of 1936 was a somewhat inconclusive version of Maxim Gorki's play *The Lower Depths* (*Les bas-fonds*, 1936), written by Renoir and Charles Spaak, set not in late nineteenth-century Russia but in some unidentified time and place.

Renoir's next film, *La grande illusion* (*The Grand Illusion*, 1937), also written in collaboration with Spaak, has proved to be an enduring masterpiece. It portrays European civilization on the brink of cultural collapse and pleads for the primacy of human relationships over national and class antagonisms, simultaneously asserting the utter futility of war and the necessity of international solidarity to combat this most destructive and degrading "grand illusion" of the human race.

One winter during World War I, three downed French pilots—an aristocrat (Pierre Fresnay), a mechanic (Jean Gabin), and a Jewish banker (Marcel Dalio)—are captured by the Germans and subsequently transferred to a series of prison camps, each one a microcosm of European society, and finally to the impregnable fortress of Wintersborn, commanded by the sympathetic Prussian aristocrat von Rauffenstein (Erich von Stroheim). Boieldieu, the French aristocrat, and von Rauffenstein become friends because they are of the same caste, and they pursue a long intellectual dialogue on the role of their dwindling class in European society. Despite the cultural barrier between Boieldieu and his two compatriots, he has earlier assisted them in digging a tunnel under a prison wall in the dead of winter—the whole film takes place in this season—because it is his duty as an officer to help them escape. Equally trapped by his officer's code, von Rauffenstein must later shoot Boieldieu during an escape attempt at Wintersborn, in which he willingly plays the decoy. Boieldieu dies painfully in von Rauffenstein's quarters, and the German commander, in a gesture of remorse, snips the flower from his much-cherished geranium plant. Both men have been victims of a rigid code of behavior that has left them no option but mutual destruction, despite their friendship. Renoir suggests that the old ruling class of Europe is doomed for precisely the same reasons (which are also the same reasons for the "grand illusion" of war).

The most striking aspect of *La grande illusion* is Renoir's use of the long take, or sequence shot—unedited shots made from a single camera setup that generally (but not always) constitute entire dramatic sequences within a film. Dramatic tension in such shots is created through *composition in depth*, or the simultaneous arrangement of dramatically significant action and objects on several spatial planes within the frame.

Composition in depth is essentially an attempt to make the two-dimensional space of the cinema screen three-dimensional, and it can be achieved only through what is known as **deep-focus** photography—a mode of filming in which the foreground, the middle ground, and the background of a shot are simultaneously in sharp focus. Technically, deep-focus photography is the achievement of a nearly perfect **depth of field**—the range of distances within which objects will be in sharp focus—within the frame. Aesthetically, deep-focus photography

provides a way of incorporating close shot, medium shot, and long shot within a single frame, and of linking character with background. It also *appears* to reproduce the field of vision of the human eye, although the eye does not possess extreme depth of field but, rather, is able to so rapidly alter focus within a depth perspective that we are never aware of the discontinuity.

The earliest film stock—and that used by nearly all commercial filmmakers until 1927—was *orthochromatic*. It possessed an extraordinary capacity for deep focus, or depth of field, in that it was relatively "fast," or sensitive to light, enabling cameramen to use small lens apertures that kept both the foreground and the background of their shots in focus. (The **lens aperture** is the iris-like diaphragm at the optical center of the lens, a point midway between the front and rear elements.) To attain its full depth of field, orthochromatic stock requires a strong, penetrating source of light to strike the negative through the narrow aperture of the lens—the sun during the cinema's first decade, mercury-vapor lamps during its second, and finally carbon arc lamps during its third. Yet orthochromatic stock was limited by its insensitivity to the red and yellow areas of the spectrum and required special filters to register them.

In 1927, concurrent with the arrival of sound, orthochromatic stock was replaced as the industry standard by *panchromatic* stock, a film sensitive to all parts of the spectrum from blue to red but initially "slower" than the earlier film. Simultaneously, the carbon arc lamps, which sputtered and popped noisily in operation, were replaced by incandescent, or tungsten, lighting, which was soundless. The new tungsten incandescent light, however, was softer and less penetrating than the light provided by the arc lamps, so cameramen were forced to widen their lens apertures and decrease the depth of field of the image.

Thus, early panchromatic focus was relatively shallow; the backgrounds of close shots were diffused, and a face in close-up would tend to become detached from its environment. With a few notable exceptions, such as James Wong Howe's photography for *Transatlantic* and *Viva Villa!* in 1933 and Hal Mohr's for *Tess of the Storm Country* in 1932, this "soft" style of photography characterized the sound film until 1940, when technical innovations in lenses, film stock, and lighting, and the creative genius of Orson Welles and Gregg Toland, restored the cinema's physical capacity for deep focus.

Despite underdeveloped technology, however, Renoir was the first major director of the sound film to compose his shots in depth, even though the depth was achieved artificially by constantly adjusting the



Pierre Fresnay and Jean Gabin in *La grande illusion* (*The Grand Illusion*; Jean Renoir, 1937).

focus of his camera to follow dramatic action within a given take. He had experimented with this technique in many of his early sound films, most successfully in *Toni* (1935), but *La grande illusion* was his first film based consistently on the principle of the long take, or sequence shot. Generally, Renoir's films include realistic and dramatically significant background and middle-ground activity in every sequence shot. Actors range about the set transacting their business while the camera shifts its focus from one plane of depth to another and back again. Significant off-frame action is often followed with a moving camera, characteristically through a series of pans within a single continuous shot. *La grande illusion* is composed almost completely of such moving sequence shots, but Renoir and his cinematographer, Christian Matras (1900–1988), never permit them to become flashy or self-conscious.

In the year of its release, *La grande illusion* won both the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Foreign Language Film and a special prize at the prestigious Venice Film Festival, even though it was banned from commercial exhibition in both Italy and Germany. In 1957, *La grande illusion* was voted one of the twelve greatest films of all time at the Brussels World's Fair.

Renoir's next project was *La Marseillaise* (1938), a semi-documentary reconstruction of some major episodes from the French Revolution, financed by the trade unions and flavored with the politics of the Popular Front. Then came *La bête humaine* (*The Human*



Roland Toutain and Jean Renoir in *La règle du jeu* (*The Rules of the Game*; Jean Renoir, 1939).

Beast, 1938), an adaptation of Zola's naturalistic novel about an alcoholic railroad engineer (played by Jean Gabin) cast in modern terms. Renoir's final French film of the period was his greatest masterpiece and one of the great works of the cinema, *La règle du jeu* (*The Rules of the Game*, 1939). Like *La grande illusion*, it is about a culture teetering on the brink of collapse, but it is a much more complicated film in both attitude and technique.

Informed by the gracious rhythms of Mozart, Johann Strauss, and Chopin, and patterned on classical French theater, *La règle du jeu* is an elegant tragicomedy of manners whose intricate plot defies easy summarization. Briefly, the young aviator André Jurieu, who has just completed a daring transatlantic flight, is in love with Christine, the wife of a wealthy Jewish landowner, the Marquis Robert de la Chesnaye (Marcel Dalio). La Chesnaye organizes a large weekend hunting party at his country estate, La Colinière, to which he invites Jurieu, Octave (a mutual friend of Jurieu and Christine, played by Renoir), and his own mistress. After a day of hunting, in which hundreds of rabbits and birds are slaughtered and maimed, we are treated to a series of love intrigues among the *haute bourgeoisie* above-stairs and among the servants below-stairs—who, in their snobbery, insincerity, and pride, are the precise mirror images of their masters. The primary characteristic of these intrigues is that not a single one is serious, and Jurieu has broken an important "rule of the game" by sincerely declaring his love for Christine in the most public way imaginable—in a radio broadcast from Orly Airport just after his transatlantic flight. Later, during an evening fête featuring extravagant theatrical entertainment and a fancy-dress ball, a jealous gamekeeper attempts to shoot his wife's suspected lover (a local poacher) in a comic chase through the ballroom reminiscent of a Marx Brothers film. Finally, the gamekeeper decides that Octave, not the poacher, is the lover, and he shoots Jurieu to death on the veranda, mistaking him for Octave and Christine for his wife. A model of civilized restraint, the marquis takes immediate command of the situation, apologizes to his guests for the "regrettable accident," and takes all appropriate steps to restore equilibrium to the world of La Colinière.

Witty, elegant, and profoundly pessimistic, *La règle du jeu* is ultimately concerned with social breakdown and cultural decadence at a particularly critical moment in European history. Renoir presents us with a world in which feeling has been replaced by manners and all that remains of civilized values is their external form—a form that will itself soon crumble. Society has become a vast collective lie, and those, like Jurieu, who break its "rules" by telling the truth come to no good. *La règle du jeu* has the moral and intellectual depth of a great novel, but it is also a brilliant piece of filmmaking. Renoir had never before used the long take and the deep focus to such striking dramatic effect. Sequence shots dominate nearly every major scene, and the camera moves continuously to follow significant action within the frame. *Fluid*, *graceful*, and *exquisitely precise* are terms that describe Renoir's camera style in *La règle du jeu*. He resorts to expressive montage only once in the entire film—appropriately, to render the mindless organized violence of the hunt.

Renoir expected *La règle du jeu* to be controversial, but he could hardly have anticipated the extremity of the reaction. The film provoked a political riot at its Paris premiere, was cut and re-edited by its distributor from one hundred and thirteen to eighty minutes, and was finally banned in late 1939 by French military censors as "demoralizing." The Nazis banned it during the Occupation, and Allied bombing destroyed the original negative in 1942. Happily, the integral version of *La règle du jeu*, minus one short scene, was reconstructed under Renoir's supervision by two French film producers in 1956 and has enjoyed a prestigious international reputation ever since. In 1962 and 1972, an international poll of film critics ranked it among the ten greatest films ever made.

In the summer of 1939, Renoir was forced to emigrate to the United States. Here, he went to work for a variety of studios, filming in rapid succession *Swamp Water* (1941)—a sort of commercial, American *Toni*, shot on location in the swamps of Georgia—and two war propaganda films, *This Land Is Mine* (1943) and *Salute to France* (1944). Renoir's most

distinguished American film was *The Southerner*, made in 1945 for United Artists. This austere, semi-documentary account of the lives of poor white farmers in the Deep South was shot on location with complete creative freedom; more than any other of Renoir's American films, it harks back to the poetic realism of the 1930s. With *The Diary of a Chambermaid* (1946), Renoir returned to French sources (Octave Mirbeau's novel, which Luis Buñuel would also film, in 1964) but moved away from the realism of his greatest period. Independently produced and shot entirely in the studio, this film about the decadence of French bourgeois society in the late nineteenth century resembled *La règle du jeu* in theme but lacked the great depth of the earlier work, and it was universally condemned in Europe, where Renoir's prewar reputation had declined. His last American film was *The Woman on the Beach* (1947), a tale of romantic obsession in a wild coastal setting. The film failed commercially and aesthetically in large part because RKO re-edited it no fewer than three times.

At this point, Renoir became increasingly interested in theater and spectacle, as they contrasted with his earlier "realistic" style. He left Hollywood to make *The River* (1951), a British coproduction, on the banks of the Ganges River. This beautiful film—Renoir's first in color—was strikingly photographed by the director's nephew, Claude Renoir, and is about the response of a fourteen-year-old British girl to India. Renoir next went to Italy to make *Le carrosse d'or* (*The Golden Coach*, 1952), about a *commedia dell'arte* theater troupe in eighteenth-century Peru; this color film attempted to explore the relationships among film, theater, and reality. Renoir appropriately abandoned composition in depth and the moving camera for *La carrosse d'or* in favor of a more theatrical mise-en-scène using long takes from a relatively stationary camera.

In 1954, Renoir returned to his native land for the first time since the war and began his last important series of French films. *French Cancan* (1954) is set in Montmartre in the late 1890s and tells the story of the impresario who founded the famous Moulin Rouge theater. Its brilliant use of color in motion evokes the paintings of the impressionists but goes beyond them, reaching its height in the spectacular twenty-minute cancan dance with which the film concludes.

Indisputably one of the great masters of world cinema, Renoir resolutely refused to be compromised by his own success. In a career that spanned forty-six years of cinema, he never ceased to experiment and explore, to consistently renew his creative vitality by striking out in new directions. *La règle du jeu* (1939) is as different from *La carrosse d'or* (1952) as both are from *Toni* (1935) and *The Southerner* (1945), and yet all four of these films are masterworks on their own terms.

Renoir was also the pioneer of composition in depth in the sound film, and according to André Bazin, he became the father of a new aesthetic:

> He alone in his searchings as director prior to *La règle du jeu* . . . forced himself to look back beyond the resources provided by montage and so uncovered the secret of film form that would permit everything to be said without chopping the world up into little fragments, that would reveal the hidden meanings in people and things without disturbing the unity natural to them. Renoir's influence on Orson Welles, who brought the technique of composition in depth to its ultimate perfection in *Citizen Kane*, is well known, and his impact on Italian neorealism was strong. His technical genius notwithstanding, Renoir was perhaps the most humanistic of all of Western cinema's major figures. He wrote, "I'm not a director—I'm a story-teller. . . . The only thing I bring to this illogical, irresponsible, and cruel universe is my love."

An artist of strong and uniquely personal vision, Jean Renoir also represents the flowering of the period of poetic realism (1934–1940), when French films were generally regarded as the most important and sophisticated in the world.



Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth in *The Lady from Shanghai* (Orson Welles, 1948).



10

Orson Welles and the Modern Sound Film

At the very moment that France was being occupied by the Nazis and the rest of Europe was engulfed in war, a young American director made a film that would transform the cinema substantially. In 1939, Orson Welles (1915–1985) was brought to Hollywood by the financially troubled RKO Pictures under an unprecedented six-film contract that gave him complete control over every aspect of production.

At twenty-four, Welles had vast experience in radio and theater. From 1933 to 1937, he directed and acted in numerous Broadway and off-Broadway plays, including a production of *Macbeth* with a voodoo setting and an anti-Fascist *Julius Caesar* set in contemporary Italy; in 1937, with John Houseman (1902–1988), he founded the famous Mercury Theatre company; and between 1938 and 1940, he wrote, directed, and starred in the weekly radio series *Mercury Theatre on the Air*, whose pseudo-documentary broadcast based on H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* caused a nationwide panic on Halloween night in 1938.

Welles had made several short films in connection with his theatrical productions, but he had never been on a **soundstage** in his life. His first feature film was to have been an adaptation of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, filmed with a subjective camera from the point of view of the narrator, who is also a participant in the action, but this project was abandoned indefinitely due to technical problems, cost overruns, and other difficulties. Next, Welles undertook

to film a script he wrote with Herman J. Mankiewicz (1898–1953), about the life and personality of a great American entrepreneur. Originally titled simply *American*, the Welles-Mankiewicz scenario ultimately became the shooting script for *Citizen Kane* (1941), the now-legendary crypto-biography of America's most powerful press lord, William Randolph Hearst (1863–1951).

Citizen Kane

Production

Welles claimed that his only preparation for directing *Citizen Kane* was to watch John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939) forty times. Ford's influence on the film is pronounced, but it is equally clear that Welles was steeped in the major European traditions, especially those of German Expressionism and the *Kammerspielfilm* and French poetic realism. If *Kane*'s narrative economy owes much to the example of Ford, its visual texture is heavily indebted to the chiaroscuro lighting of Lang, the fluid camera of Murnau, the baroque mise-en-scène of von Sternberg, and the deep-focus realism of Renoir. Credit is also due to Welles's remarkably talented collaborators—Mankiewicz; the Mercury Theatre players; the composer Bernard Herrmann; the editor Robert Wise; and the unit art director Perry Ferguson.

Yet Welles's greatest single technical asset in the filming of *Kane* was his brilliant director of photography, Gregg Toland (1904–1948). Toland had earned a distinguished reputation as a cinematographer in Hollywood in the 1930s and had experimented with deep-focus photography and ceilinged sets in his three most recent films: *Wuthering Heights* (William Wyler, 1939), for which he won an Academy Award; *The Grapes of Wrath* (John Ford, 1940); and *The Long Voyage Home* (John Ford, 1940).

Welles (or Mankiewicz) had conceived *Kane* as a film structured largely in flashback, as characters recall their acquaintance with the great man (played by Welles himself) after his death, and he wanted the narrative to flow poetically from image to image in a manner analogous to the process of human memory. Thus, Welles used straight cuts largely for shock effect and made most of his narrative transitions through lingering, in-camera lap dissolves. More important, Welles planned to construct the film as a series of long takes, or sequence shots, scrupulously composed in depth to eliminate the necessity for narrative cutting within major dramatic scenes.

To accomplish this, Toland perfected for Welles a method of deep-focus photography capable of achieving an unprecedented depth of field. The "soft" style of photography favored by the studios during the 1930s was characterized by diffused lighting and relatively shallow focus—a product of the wider lens apertures required for filming in incandescent light. By the end of the decade, technical improvements in film stocks and lighting permitted greater depth of field, but most studio cinematographers were conservative and continued to practice the "soft" style. Toland, however, was a bold experimenter whose work in depth—especially in *The Long Voyage Home*—had earned him a reputation for the kind of flamboyant originality prized by Welles in his Mercury Theatre productions.

Toland's self-styled "pan focus" photography for *Kane* was a synthesis of many techniques he had used before. It employed the newly available Eastman Super XX film stock (an ultrafast film with a very high sensitivity to light—four times faster, in fact, than its standard Super X, without a notable increase in grain) in combination with a 24mm **wide-angle lens**, whose aperture was "stopped down" (reduced in size) to f-8 or less, a radical shift from common practice. The scenes were lit by the high-intensity arc lamps recently introduced for Technicolor production, and the lenses were coated with a clear plastic substance (magnesium fluoride) to reduce glare. Finally, Toland used the Mitchell Camera Corporation's sound-insulated BNC, a relatively small and portable camera first used professionally in *Wuthering Heights*, which greatly increased the operator's freedom and range of movement. With these tools, Toland was able to achieve something very close to "universal" focus within the frames of *Citizen Kane*, and Welles was able to distribute dramatic action across a depth perspective unlike anything ever used in a sound film.

Since the early 1960s, improvements in lenses, lighting, and film emulsions have greatly simplified deep-focus photography, but the technical principles remain much the same. Welles's use of the deep-focus sequence shot in *Kane* demonstrated a mastery of composition in depth. Like Renoir, he used the deep-focus format functionally, to develop scenes without resorting to montage, but he also used it expressively, as Eisenstein had used montage, to create metaphors for things that the cinema cannot explicitly show.



Orson Welles and Gregg Toland shooting *Citizen Kane*.

At the height of his arrogance and power, for example, Kane often looms like a giant in the foreground of the frame, dwarfing other characters in the middle ground and the background and towering over the audience, often from a low camera angle. Later, Kane's self-absorbed alienation from the world and everyone in it is conveyed by the growing distance that separates him from all other characters within the frame. In these instances, Welles's use of depth perspective involves an expressive distortion of space that creates a metaphor for something in Kane's psychology.

At other times, Welles uses deep focus both to achieve narrative economy and to echelon characters dramatically within the frame. Early in the film, a brilliant deep-focus sequence shot encapsulates the story of Kane's lost childhood. We see the front room of a boardinghouse in which Charlie Kane's mother signs the agreement that will permit her son to be taken to the East, and later inherit a fortune. In exchanging her son's childhood for an adult life of fantastic wealth, she is selling him, and she knows it.

Welles set the shot up like this: In the foreground of the frame, Mrs. Kane and Mr. Thatcher, whose bank is the executor of the estate, sign the agreement. The middle ground is occupied by Charlie's weak-willed father, whose vacillation about the agreement is rendered visible as he paces back and forth between foreground and background. In the back of the room is a window through which, in the extreme background of the frame, we see Charlie playing unsuspectingly in the snow with his sled and shouting, "The Union forever!" while in the foreground of the same shot, he is being


KANE



Depth as fate: Mrs. Kane (Agnes Moorehead) and Mr. Thatcher (George Coulouris) in the foreground; Mr. Kane (Harry Shannon) in the middle ground; and young Charlie Kane (Buddy Swan) in the background, outside, framed by the window.

indentured to his own future. Thus, in a single shot, Welles is able to communicate a large amount of narrative and thematic information that, in a conventionally edited scene, would require many shots.

Kane is a film of much fluid intraframe movement. The sequence just described, for instance, actually begins with a medium-long shot of Charlie at play in the snow through the open window of the boardinghouse; then the camera pulls back rapidly to reveal the other characters and elements in the composition. Yet there are three virtuoso moving camera shots in the film, each of which is a tour de force of fluidity and continuity. In the first, from a shot of a poster announcing the appearance of Kane's second wife, Susan, at the El Rancho nightclub, the camera cranes up vertically to the club's flashing neon sign, then tracks horizontally *through* it and down onto the rain-spattered glass of a skylight. The movement continues after a quick dissolve (made invisible by flashing lightning and distracting thunder), as the camera descends to a medium shot of Susan Alexander Kane and a newsman talking together at a table in the club's interior. In another shot, midway through the film, the camera cranes up vertically from a long shot of Susan singing on the stage of the Chicago Municipal Opera House to a catwalk some four stories above it, where a stagehand is holding his nose, making a richly deserved gesture of contempt for her performance. Finally, there is the long swooping **crane shot** that concludes the film, as the camera tracks slowly across the vast collection of artifacts that Kane has amassed in a lifetime of collecting, coming to rest on the object of the search for "Rosebud" that gives the film its narrative impulse or motive.

(left) Orson Welles in looming perspective in *Citizen Kane*.







Dorothy Comingore as Susan Alexander Kane in *Citizen Kane*: frames from the El Rancho nightclub sequence.

Other remarkable aspects of this wholly remarkable film are its expressive chiaroscuro lighting and frequent use of extreme low-angle photography in connection with the figure of Kane. The latter necessitated many muslin-ceilinged sets, which had been used in Hollywood previously, especially in the work of Toland, but never so consistently and effectively to suggest a sense of claustrophobia and enclosure. (Filmmakers have conventionally left their interior sets roofless, first to admit the sunlight and later to facilitate artificial lighting and the free movement of the boom crane and the microphone.) Finally, and most significantly, attention must be called to *Kane*'s innovative use of sound.

Welles's experience in radio served him well in recording the sound track for *Kane*. He invented for his few montage sequences a technique he called the "lightning mix," in which shots were rapidly linked together not by the narrative logic of their images, but by the continuity of the sound track. Kane's growth from child to adult is conveyed in a matter of seconds: a shot of his guardian giving him a sled and wishing him a "Merry Christmas" is cut together with a shot of the same man some fifteen years later, as he completes the sentence "and a Happy New Year," again addressing Kane, but in a different dramatic context.

Another lightning mix conveys the entire progress of Kane's campaign for governor of New York in four brief shots. First, we see Kane listening to Susan Alexander sing (wretchedly) at the piano in the parlor of her boardinghouse. This dissolves into another shot of the two in the same relative positions in a much more elegantly appointed parlor, that of an apartment in which Kane has obviously set her up. At the end of Susan's performance, Kane claps, and the shot is dovetailed with another of a friend addressing a small street rally in Kane's behalf. The applause, which has been continuous on the sound track since the parlor shot, grows louder and multiplies in response to the speaker's words: "I am speaking for Charles Foster Kane, the fighting liberal . . . who entered upon this campaign with one purpose only—." Welles cuts finally to a long shot of Kane himself addressing a huge political rally at Madison Square Garden and completing the sentence as the camera begins to track toward the speaker's platform: "—to point out and make public the dishonesty, the downright villainy of Boss Jim Gettys' political machine." The address continues, and the narrative resumes a more conventional form.

Another device introduced by Welles in *Kane* was the overlapping sound montage in which—as in reality—people speak not one after another (as they



Visual and aural depth combined: Kane finishing Jedediah Leland's (Joseph Cotten) review.

do on the stage), but virtually all at once so that part of what is said is lost. Overlapping dialogue between major players in a film had been used as early as 1931 by Lewis Milestone in *The Front Page*, but it had not been used to produce a sense of realistic collective conversation as it was in *Kane*. A good example in the film (and there is an example in almost every major sequence) occurs in the screening room after the projection of the *News on the March* newsreel. So many people are speaking on the track simultaneously that one has the distinct sense of having accidentally stumbled into the aftermath of a board meeting. Welles continued to use this technique in his later films, and it has influenced many other filmmakers—both his contemporaries, such as Carol Reed, and later directors, such as Robert Altman, whose commitment to overlapping sound montage led some unknowledgeable critics to complain about the "poor quality" of his sound tracks.

A final example of Welles's subtle refinement of sound occurs in one of his best deep-focus setups. Kane, in a newsroom, is seated at a typewriter in the extreme foreground of the frame, finishing a bad review of Susan Alexander Kane's Chicago opera debut that his ex-friend Jed Leland has written. Correspondingly, we hear the tapping of the typewriter keys on the "foreground" of the sound track. From a door in the background of the frame, Leland emerges—barely recognizable, so great is the distance—and begins to walk slowly toward Kane. As he moves from the background to the foreground of the frame, Leland's footsteps move from the "background" to the "foreground" of the sound track—from being initially inaudible to having nearly an equal volume with the keys. Similarly, in the Chicago Opera House shot, as the camera dollies up from the stage to the catwalk, Susan's voice grows ever more distant on the track, creating once more a precise correspondence of visual and aural "space."







Framing story: frames from the death sequence, leading into the *News on the March* newsreel.

Structure

The formal organization of *Citizen Kane* is extraordinary. Like a Jorge Luis Borges story, it begins with the death of its subject. Through an elaborate series of lap-dissolved stills, we are led from a No Trespassing sign on a chain-link fence farther and farther into the forbidding Kane estate of Xanadu, as if by the tracking movement of a camera, until at last we approach a lighted window high in a Gothic tower. The light is suddenly extinguished, and Welles dissolves to the interior of the room, where Charles Foster Kane dies in state, clutching a small glass globe that contains a swirling snow scene and whispering, "Rosebud"—the word that motivates the film and echoes through it until the final frames. Kane drops the globe in dying; it rolls down the steps and breaks in close-up. Through the distorting lens of the convex broken glass (actually, a wide-angle lens focused through a diminishing glass), we watch a nurse enter the room from a door in the background in long shot; she walks to the foreground in close shot, folds Kane's arms, and pulls the covers up to his chest.

After a fade to a medium shot of Kane's body silhouetted against the window, we suddenly cut to a logo projected obliquely on a screen, and the sound track booms the title "News on the March!"—introducing a sophisticated parody of a *March of Time* newsreel on Kane's life and death. Welles is thus able to give a brief and coherent, if unsequential, overview of the major events in Kane's life before they become jumbled like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle in the succeeding narratives. (The *March of Time* was a popular series of skillfully produced film news journals released monthly in the United States between 1935 and 1951.)

In a sense, the newsreel is *Citizen Kane* itself in miniature. Like the larger film, it begins with Kane's death (or his funeral); covers the same events in a similar overlapping, chronological manner; and ends with the mystery of Kane's character unresolved. We learn from the newsreel that Kane, hated and loved by millions of Americans, was an enormously controversial figure whose vast wealth was inherited by fluke: a supposedly worthless deed left to his mother in payment for a boardinghouse room gave him sole ownership of the priceless Colorado Lode. We learn that in an earlier period of American history, near the turn of the century, Kane's wealth and the influence of his newspapers were incalculable. We learn that he was married twice—first to a president's niece, then to Susan Alexander, "singer," for whom he built the Chicago Municipal Opera House



Framing story: Thompson (William Alland) is dispatched by his editor (Phillip Van Zandt) to find "Rosebud—dead or alive. . . ."

and Xanadu. We learn that Kane's promising and apparently nonstop political career was destroyed during a campaign for the New York governorship by a "love-nest" scandal involving Susan Alexander. We learn finally that Kane's newspaper empire was crippled by the Depression and that he subsequently exiled himself to the solitude of Xanadu, where, after many years of seclusion, he died in 1941.

The newsreel ends, and the camera discovers a dimly and expressionistically lit projection room, where the contemporary media journalists (successors of the Kane/Hearst empire and identified with the Luce press) who produced the film discuss it. Rawlston, the executive in charge, thinks it needs an "angle" that will somehow explain the paradoxical figure of Kane. Someone seizes on the man's dying words, the film's release is postponed, and a journalist named Thompson (played by William Alland) is sent out to interview all of Kane's intimate acquaintances to discover the meaning of "Rosebud" and, it is hoped, of Kane himself.

The rest of the film is contained in a series of five narratives—told in flashback by each of the people Thompson talks to—and a balancing epilogue of sorts. The narratives overlap with one another and with the *News on the March* newsreel at certain points, so that some of the events in Kane's life are presented from several different points of view within the total film. From the screening room, a shock cut takes us to a poster on a brick wall, suddenly illuminated by lightning, which announces the El Rancho nightclub appearance of the second Mrs. Kane. Through the elaborate craning movement previously described, we are brought into the interior of the club, where a drunk and hostile Susan Alexander Kane (Dorothy Comingore) refuses to talk to Thompson. He can get no information from the headwaiter either, and the screen then fades out and into a daytime sequence at the Walter P. Thatcher Memorial



Extreme depth: in the banquet for former *Chronicle* staff, Kane (Orson Welles) is in the foreground, and Mr. Bernstein (Everett Sloane), with Jed Leland (Joseph Cotten) on his left, are in the background.

Library. (Thatcher, we come to understand later in the sequence, was Kane's guardian and executor of the Colorado Lode estate.) Here, Thompson is grudgingly given access to Thatcher's memoirs, and as the journalist reads the words "I first encountered Mr. Kane in 1871 . . . ," the screen dissolves from a close-up of Thatcher's longhand to a lyrical shot of a boy playing with a sled in front of Mrs. Kane's boardinghouse, somewhere in Colorado, during a snowstorm.

In the long deep-focus shot described previously, Mrs. Kane (Agnes Moorehead) signs the papers that make Thatcher's bank the boy's guardian and certify his inheritance. Outside, young Kane is told of his imminent departure for the East; he pushes Thatcher (George Coulouris) into the snow with his sled. We dissolve to a medium shot of the sled, some time later, covered with drifting snow, and then into the "Merry Christmas—Happy New Year" lightning mix, which places us in New York City many years later on the occasion of Kane's twenty-first birthday. We learn that of all the holdings in "the world's sixth largest private fortune," which Kane is about to inherit, only the financially failing daily newspaper, the *New York Inquirer*, interests him because he thinks "it would be fun to run a newspaper." Next, in a brief but potent montage sequence, we see Thatcher increasingly outraged by the *Inquirer*'s populist, muckraking (and anti-Republican) headlines, until he finally confronts Kane in the *Inquirer* office. Their antipathy for each other—both ideological and personal—is apparent, and Thatcher warns Kane of financial disaster. As if to confirm this prophecy, the following sequence, composed in depth, shows Kane, much older, signing his now vast but bankrupt newspaper chain over to Thatcher in the middle of the Depression, and here Thatcher's narrative ends.

Thompson next visits Mr. Bernstein (Everett Sloane), once Kane's general manager and right-hand

man, now the aging chairman of the board of the Kane Corporation. Bernstein's narrative begins by recalling in flashback the first day at the *Inquirer* office, when he, Kane, and Kane's old college buddy Jedediah Leland (Joseph Cotten) arrived to claim the paper in what was clearly to be a lark for all three young men. Yet the playfulness is mitigated a few scenes later when, in the presence of Bernstein and Leland, Kane composes a "Declaration of Principles" for his first front page. Leland asks to keep the manuscript, comparing it facetiously to the Declaration of Independence. In this sequence, the twenty-one-year-old Kane is revealed to be the romantic idealist of the crusading populist headlines so repugnant to Thatcher, and Leland's admiration for him is unqualified.

In the next sequence, Kane, Leland, and Bernstein are seen reflected in the window of the *New York Chronicle* building, gazing at a photograph of the *Chronicle*'s top-flight staff, which, they admit, has made it the most successful newspaper in the city. The camera moves in close on the picture and then back out to reveal the group, suddenly animated and sitting for another photograph six years later—this time to commemorate their joining the staff of the *Inquirer* en masse. A raucous banquet sequence follows, in which the dining table is photographed in extreme depth, with ice sculptures of Leland and Bernstein in the foreground at one end, Kane in the background at the other, and the new staff members occupying the space in between. During the revelry, Leland expresses to Bernstein his concern that these new men, so fresh from the *Chronicle* and its policies, will change Kane, and the scene dissolves into another one of Bernstein and Leland uncrating boxes of sculpture that Kane has been collecting on a European tour. It is revealed by Bernstein that Kane may also be "collecting" something (or someone) else.

A dissolve brings us to the interior of the *Inquirer* office some time later, on the day of Kane's return from Europe. The staff attempts to present him with an engraved loving cup, and he awkwardly leaves them a notice announcing his engagement to Miss Emily Monroe Norton, the niece of the president of the United States. The staff watches from the windows of the *Inquirer* building as Kane and his fiancée drive off in a carriage, and the second narrative draws to a close with Bernstein speculating to Thompson that maybe "Rosebud" was "something he lost."

Thompson next pays a visit to Leland, who has become a somewhat senile (but still intelligent) old man confined to a nursing home. Indeed, the dissolves into the Leland narrative flashback are among the most lingering in the whole film, as if to suggest the sluggishness of his memory, and not a little of the film's impact derives from this flashback technique of narration, which permits us to see all of the major characters in youth and age almost simultaneously. Like those of the other characters, Leland's narrative is chronological but not continuous. Initially, he relates the story of Kane's first marriage in a sequence that convincingly compresses the relationship's slow decline into a series of brief breakfast-table conversations linked by swish pans and overlapping sound—that is, a lightning mix. (How Leland could recount these intimate details without having been present at the table is never made clear, and his ability to do so verbatim constitutes one of several violations of dramatic point of view in the film; the cinematic logic of the flashbacks is so perfect, though, that we scarcely notice.)

Next, in a much longer flashback, Leland describes Kane's first meeting with Susan Alexander and Kane's subsequent political ruin at the hands of his opponent, "Boss" Jim Gettys (and as a result of his own stubborn, egomaniacal refusal to withdraw from the race). Of particular note is the scene in which Leland confronts Kane after he has lost the election. The entire sequence is shot in depth from an extremely low angle (the camera was actually placed in a hole in the floor to make the shot), so that Kane looms above both Leland and the audience, a grotesque, inflated parody of the



Orson Welles and Gregg Toland prepare for an extreme low-angle shot.

















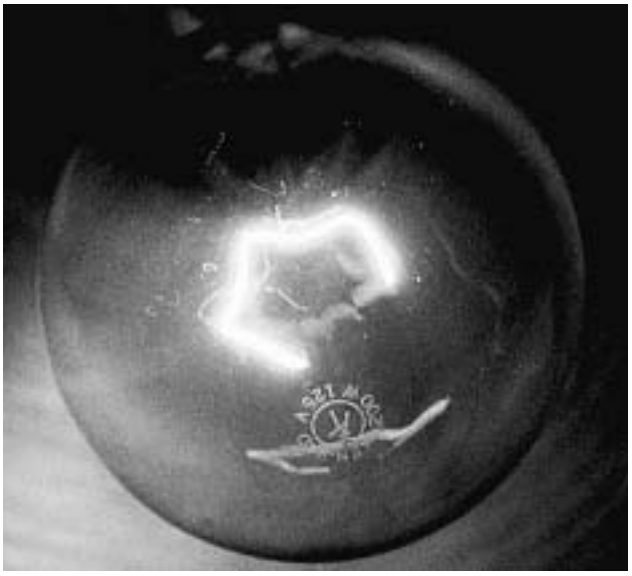

(left) Like so many others, this breakfast-table sequence begins and ends with the four-part, in-camera dissolves used throughout the film to evoke the process of memory.

politically powerful figure he has so desperately tried (and failed) to become.

Drunk, and disillusioned with his idol, Leland insists that he be transferred to the Chicago office, and Kane reluctantly consents. The final section of Leland's narrative concerns Kane's marriage to Susan Alexander and her singing debut at the opera house he has built for her. The lengthy vertical craning shot from Susan performing abjectly on the stage to the stagehand holding his nose occurs here, as does Leland's long, deep-focus walk from the back of the *Chicago Inquirer* newsroom to the extreme foreground of the frame, where an embittered Kane finishes Leland's bad review of the performance and summarily fires him.

Here Leland's narrative ends, and Thompson returns once more to the El Rancho nightclub. Again, the camera travels up from the poster of Susan Alexander, cranes through the sign, and dissolves through the skylight to a medium-close shot of Thompson and Susan sitting at a table. Susan, who has finally agreed to talk, begins her story with a flashback to a session with her voice coach, Signor Matisti, that occurred shortly after her marriage to Kane. Susan, Matisti, and a pianist occupy the foreground of a deep-focus shot of a large, expensively decorated room. Susan's voice is so bad that Matisti refuses to continue the lesson, but at this point Kane emerges from a door in the back of the room and walks toward the group, becoming larger and larger as he moves toward the lens. When he reaches the foreground, he browbeats both Matisti and Susan into continuing the humiliating session, until a dissolve brings us to the second version of Susan's singing debut at the Chicago Municipal Opera House. We have already seen her performance from Leland's point of view in his narrative, and now we see virtually the same events from Susan's perspective as she looks out into the vast and terrifying void of the audience, invisible beyond the footlights. Her aria begins, and she attempts to fill the huge theater with her frail voice. (The high-tessitura aria to *Salammbo*, the fake opera Herrmann composed for Susan's debut, was purposely designed to exceed the capacity of Comingore's voice and create the terror of a singer hopelessly out of her depth at the outset of a very long performance.) Welles intercuts subjective shots of Matisti frantically coaching her with audience







reaction shots (contempt, boredom, disbelief) and close-ups of an aging Kane peering grimly toward the stage. When the performance ends with very light applause, Kane claps loudly, as if to fill the hall with his solitary accolade.

A dissolve brings us to Kane and Susan the morning after in a Chicago apartment, where Susan shrilly denounces Leland for his bad review—actually completed by Kane. We learn that Kane has fired Leland and sent him a check for $25,000, which Leland has returned, along with the pompously idealist "Declaration of Principles" that Kane had printed in his first issue of the *New York Inquirer* years earlier. We also learn that Susan's singing career has been imposed on her by Kane, who insists that it continue.

There follows a rapid montage of dissolves, overlaid on the sound track by Susan's voice, in which *Inquirer* headlines from cities around the country acclaiming Susan Alexander's meteoric rise to stardom are lap-dissolved alternately with shots of flashing call lights, Susan onstage, Matisti in the prompter's box, and Susan receiving flowers at an ever-increasing rate until a klieg light suddenly fizzles and goes out, cutting off Susan's voice and leaving us in total darkness.

Moments later, we slowly fade in on a deep-focus shot of a darkened room: in the extreme foreground is a near-empty glass of liquid and a spoon (this particular foreground object is reproduced not through deep focus, but through an in-camera matte shot); in the middle ground Susan tosses in bed, breathing heavily; in the background a door flies open and Kane bursts into the room, barely foiling her suicide attempt. Susan is treated by a discreet doctor, and Kane promises that she needn't sing again.

Now we fade to Xanadu, sometime later, where the final portion of Susan's narrative takes place. Here, in deep-focus shots that grotesquely distance them from one another across the breadth of a palatial chamber, Kane and Susan pursue a series of conversations that shows them to be utterly at odds. Kane has become a cynical domestic tyrant and Susan a virtual prisoner of the estate; she passes the time endlessly working and reworking jigsaw puzzles—a metaphor for the mystery of identity in the film. Against Susan's will, Kane arranges a spectacularly extravagant weekend "picnic"

(top left) Susan Alexander Kane (Dorothy Comingore) "singing."

(middle left) A klieg light fizzles, indicating Susan's exhaustion.

(bottom left) Susan's suicide attempt in deep focus.



Kane and the distance.

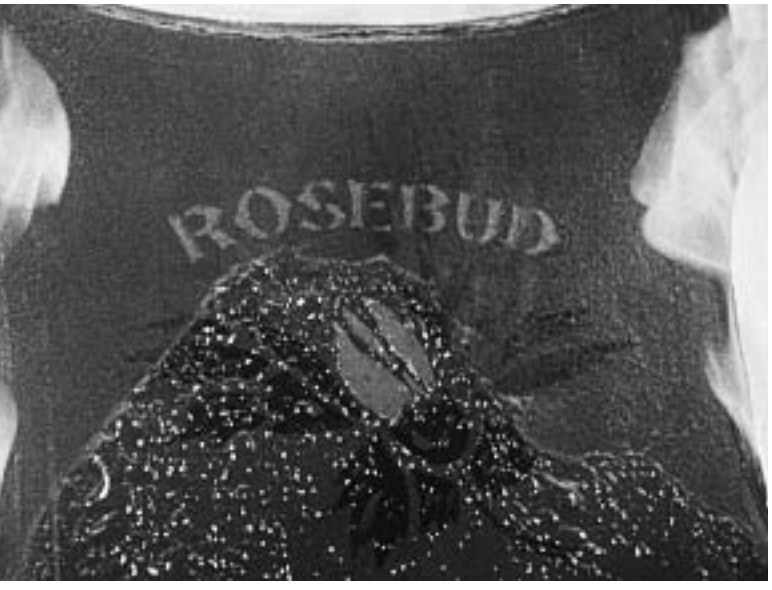
in the Everglades, where the two fight openly, and he slaps her. The next day at Xanadu, Susan announces to Kane that she is leaving him for good; he begs her to stay, but realizing Kane's nearly constitutional inability to return love, she refuses and walks out the door. Susan concludes her narrative by advising Thompson to talk to Raymond, the butler, who "knows where all the bodies are buried," when he visits Xanadu. The camera moves back and up, dissolves through the skylight, and pulls back through the El Rancho sign, reversing the movement of its entry.

Dissolves bring us to the gate of Xanadu and then to the interior for Raymond's brief narrative, which begins where Susan's ended. It opens not with a dissolve, but with a shocking straight cut from Raymond (Paul Stewart) and Thompson on the stairs to a close shot of a shrieking cockatoo, behind which we see Susan in the middle ground emerging from the same door she has begun to walk through (from the other side) at the end of her own narrative as she leaves Kane and Xanadu. Raymond's flashback then depicts the violent tantrum Kane throws as she departs: he staggers about Susan's bedroom like some mechanized madman, smashing furniture, mirrors, cosmetic jars, and all manner of trinkets and bric-a-brac until his hand finally comes to rest on the glass globe with the snow scene that we first saw at his death in the beginning of the film and later saw in Susan's apartment when they met. We hear Kane whisper, "Rosebud!" and watch him shuffle slowly out of Susan's demolished room, past a gauntlet of staring servants and guests, and down a huge hall of mirrors as Raymond's narrative concludes.

Now Thompson and Raymond move down the central staircase into the great hall of Xanadu, where we see in long shot that a multitude of reporters, photographers, and workmen have assembled in a mass effort to catalogue and liquidate Kane's huge collection of objects. The camera pulls back to follow the two men







Framing story: the conclusion of the long, slow track over Kane's vast collection of things reveals the identity of "Rosebud."

as they pass through the hall, discovering as it does so newspeople photographing both the treasures and the trash of the Kane collection—Renaissance sculptures, Kane's mother's pot-bellied stove, Oriental statuary, the loving cup presented to Kane by the *Inquirer* staff on his return from Europe, priceless paintings, a myriad of jigsaw puzzles, and so on. Thompson's colleagues ask him whether he has discovered the meaning of "Rosebud." He replies that he hasn't and that, in any case, he no longer believes in the quest: "I don't think any word can explain a man's life. No, I guess 'Rosebud' is just a piece in a jigsaw puzzle, a missing piece."

Thompson and the others leave to catch the train back to New York, and a lap dissolve brings us to an aerial view of the hall, with the camera shooting down over the vast collection that stretches away into the distance. Another lap dissolve brings the camera a little closer to the collection, as it begins to track slowly over the entire mass of crates, statues, boxes, and belongings—the ruins and relics of Kane's loveless life—which, from our aerial perspective, resemble nothing so much as the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. The shot continues for some time until the camera reaches the humble possessions of Mrs. Kane and dollies down gracefully into an eye-level shot of her things. We see a man grab a sled and, in the next shot, throw it into a furnace at Raymond's command. We dissolve to a close-up of the burning sled and can read on it the word "Rosebud" just before the letters melt away in flames. A dissolve brings us to an exterior long shot of Xanadu at night, as we first encountered it, with smoke billowing from its chimneys. The camera tilts up to follow the smoke, dissolves to the chain-link fence surrounding the estate, and pans down slowly to the No Trespassing sign with which the film began.

Thus, *Citizen Kane* concludes with the mystery of its central figure unresolved. The identity of "Rosebud" is clearly inadequate to account for the terrible emptiness at the heart of Kane, and of America, and is meant to be. Its power as a symbol of lost love and innocence lies in its very insufficiency, for the "missing piece" of the jigsaw puzzle of Kane's life, the "something he lost," turns out to be an inanimate object, and a regressive one at that. In its barrenness, "Rosebud" becomes a perfect symbol of Kane's inability to relate to people in human terms, or to love, and the ultimate emblem of his futile attempt to fill the void in himself with objects. In the film's two-hour running time, we have seen Kane from seven separate perspectives—those of the newsreel, the five narrators, and the concluding reprise—and we probably have come to know more about the circumstances of his life than the man would have known

himself. We know what he did and how he lived and died, but we can never know what he *meant*—perhaps, Welles seems to suggest, because, like "Rosebud," he was ultimately meaningless, or perhaps because reality itself is ambiguous and unreliable. In any case, it is the quest for meaning, rather than its ultimate conclusion, that makes *Citizen Kane* such a rich and important film.

Influence

In the year of its release, *Citizen Kane* was a radically experimental film—fully twenty years ahead of its time—and was widely recognized as such by American critics. Yet it failed at the box office less because of its experimental nature than because of an aura of fear in Hollywood created by attacks on Welles and RKO in the Hearst press. Hearst was still living, and his vassals attempted to suppress what they correctly took to be an unflattering portrait of their master. Though they were unsuccessful in preventing the film's release, the adverse publicity made it difficult for *Kane* to get bookings and advertising. As a result, the film did poorly outside of New York City and was withdrawn from circulation until the mid-1950s, when it played the **art house** circuit and began to acquire a more sophisticated audience. Since then, *Kane* has been voted the "Best Film of All Time" in six successive international polls (Brussels, 1958; *Sight and Sound*, 1962, 1972, 1982, 1992, 2002), and there is every indication that its critical reputation continues to grow. According to François Truffaut, the young French *cinéastes*, who would later form the New Wave, found in *Kane*'s 1946 Paris premiere the ultimate justification of their reverence for American cinema.

Kane's most important and pervasive influence, however, did not begin to be felt until the mid-1950s, after the advent of the widescreen processes, when European critics—notably, Bazin—discovered in it (and, less emphatically, in Renoir's films) the model for a new film aesthetic based not on montage, but on the "long take," or sequence shot. The primary concern of the long-take aesthetic is not the *sequencing of images*, as in montage, but the *disposition of space within the frame*, or mise-en-scène. Welles is today regarded, for all practical purposes, as the founder and master of this aesthetic (in the same way that Eisenstein is regarded as the founder and master of montage), though its lineage can be traced as far back as Louis Feuillade.

Finally, *Kane* was the first recognizably modern sound film, and it stood in the same relationship to its medium in 1941 as did *The Birth of a Nation* in 1914 and *Potemkin* in 1925—that is, it was an achievement in the development of narrative form, years in advance of its time, that significantly influenced most of the important films that followed it. Through deep-focus photography, *Kane* attempts to technically reproduce the actual field of vision of the human eye in order to structure our visual perception of screen space by means of composition in depth. Through its innovative use of sound, it attempts to reproduce the actual aural experience of the human ear and then to manipulate our aural perception of screen space by distorting and qualifying this experience. And in both respects, though the technology is not the same, *Kane* brilliantly anticipates the contemporary cinema of widescreen photography and stereophonic sound.

Contrary to popular belief, *Kane* was anything but a financially extravagant production. The entire film—cavernous ceilinged sets and all—was made for $839,727, with a remarkable economy of means: for many scenes, Welles and Ferguson converted standing sets from other RKO pictures, and in the Everglades sequence, they actually used jungle footage from *Son of Kong* (1933), complete with animated bats. Nevertheless, the financial failure of the film stigmatized Welles as a loser in Hollywood, and he was never again permitted to have total control of an industry production.

Welles after *Citizen Kane*

Welles's second film, *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), is one of the great lost masterworks of the cinema. Like von Stroheim's *Greed* (1924) and Eisenstein's *¡Que viva México!* (1931–1932), *The Magnificent Ambersons* was taken out of its director's hands and radically recut to satisfy the exigencies of the new wartime economy, as perceived by the Bureau of Motion Picture Affairs. While Welles was in Brazil shooting footage for a semi-documentary titled *It's All True*, co-sponsored by RKO and the State Department, RKO cut *The Magnificent Ambersons* from one hundred and thirty two to eighty-eight minutes and provided it with a totally incongruous happy ending shot by the film's production manager, Freddie Fleck. (In addition, one scene was reshot by the editor, Robert Wise, and another by Mercury Theater business manager Jack Moss.)

Flawed though it is, *The Magnificent Ambersons* remains a great and powerful film. Adapted by Welles from Booth Tarkington's novel, it parallels

the twentieth century decline of a proud and wealthy provincial family with the rise of the modern industrial city of Indianapolis. It is an unabashedly nostalgic film whose mise-en-scène is carefully calculated to create a sense of longing for the past. Although he was no Gregg Toland, cinematographer Stanley Cortez's high-contrast lighting and deep-focus photography of the interior of the Amberson mansion produced some of the most beautiful sequence shots ever to appear on the American screen. Like *Citizen Kane*, the film is constructed largely of long takes, with much spectacular tracking movement of the camera, and Welles's revolutionary use of the lightning mix and sound montage exceeds even his own earlier work. Though the eighty-eight-minute version that has survived can only hint at the epic sweep of the original, *The Magnificent Ambersons* as it stands today is a masterpiece of mood, decor, and composition in depth. It is also a remarkably intelligent and prophetic film that suggests (in 1942, and in a story set in 1905) that the quality of American life will ultimately be destroyed by the automobile and urbanization.

Distributed on a double bill with a Lupe Velez comedy, *The Magnificent Ambersons* was a commercial disaster. So was *Journey into Fear* (1942; released 1943), a stylish adaptation of an Eric Ambler espionage novel set in the Middle East, starring Welles and the Mercury Players, and co-directed by Welles (uncredited) and Norman Foster (1900–1976). This was the beginning of a long-standing antagonism between Welles and those who ran the American film industry, an antagonism that was never fully resolved. Welles returned to broadcasting and the theater for the remainder of the war, though his striking performance as Rochester in *Jane Eyre* (directed in 1943 by Robert Stevenson, whom Welles seems to have influenced) did much to establish





Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth in *The Lady from Shanghai* (Orson Welles, 1948): the aquarium sequence.

him as a popular film actor (a circumstance that would later permit him to finance his own productions when times got hard, as they frequently did).

In 1945, Welles returned to Hollywood to direct and star in *The Stranger* (1946) for the newly formed International Pictures, but he was required to adhere closely to an existing script and a prearranged editing schedule. Welles submitted to the condition, and the resulting film is an intentional, if preposterous, self-parody about the tracking down of a Nazi war criminal (Welles), who is somehow posing as a master at a New England prep school and married to the headmaster's daughter (Loretta Young). Technically, the film is fairly conventional, and Welles regarded it as his worst. Nevertheless, it was nationally distributed by RKO, and its commercial success helped him land a job at Columbia directing his brilliant and exotic essay in film noir, *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947; released 1948), which starred Welles and his second wife, Rita Hayworth (1918–1987). This bizarre film of corruption, murder, and betrayal is cast in the form of a thriller, but its theme is the moral anarchy of the postwar world. Though its intricate, rambling plot is almost impossible to follow, cinematically the film is one of Welles's finest achievements: the haunting sequence shots of the assignation between Welles and Hayworth in the San Francisco Aquarium, the perfectly cut chase in the Chinese theater, and most of all, the montage of the two-way shootout in the hall of mirrors that concludes the film have become textbook examples of Welles's genius. Because of the obscurity of its narrative, *The Lady from Shanghai* was a financial failure, and Welles became persona non grata in Hollywood for nearly a decade.

(left) Tim Holt and Anne Baxter on the stairs and Joseph Cotten and Dolores Costello dancing in *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Orson Welles, 1942).







In order to continue making films, Welles was forced to exile himself to Europe, but before he left, he turned out a final Mercury Theatre production—a nightmarishly Expressionistic version of *Macbeth* (1948), shot in twenty-three days on papier-mâché and cardboard sets for the B-studio Republic Pictures. More Welles than Shakespeare, with Welles playing Macbeth, the film still manages to convey an atmosphere of brooding evil and create a convincing portrait of a man driven by ambition beyond the bounds of the moral universe (a characteristic theme of both Shakespeare and Welles), in a culture that has only just emerged from barbarism. In moving to Europe, Welles lost the great technical and financial resources of the Hollywood studios, but he gained much in creative freedom. As a result, his European films tend to be technically imperfect and imaginatively unrestrained.

The first of these was another Shakespeare adaptation, *Othello* (1952), with Welles in the title role. The film was made during a period of four years, from 1948 to 1952, while Welles financed the production by acting in other people's films. With interiors shot all over Europe and exteriors shot in the ancient citadel at Mogador, Morocco, *Othello* is a film of light and openness—of wind, sun, and sea—as opposed to the brooding darkness of *Macbeth* and *The Lady from Shanghai*. Repeatedly recast, reshot, recut, and redubbed, *Othello* nevertheless won the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival when it was finally completed in 1952.

Welles's next film, *Mr. Arkadin* (British title: *Confidential Report*, 1955), a failed attempt to remake *Citizen Kane* in European terms, was shot on an extremely low budget during an eight-month period in Spain, Germany, and France. On the French Riviera, a down-at-the-heels adventurer named Van Stratten is hired by the mysterious European business tycoon Gregory Arkadin (based on the real-life war profiteer Miles Krueger and played by Welles) to piece together the details of his buried past. Van Stratten's Kafkaesque quest takes him all over Europe as he interviews the people who possess the secrets of Arkadin's past life, only to discover at the end of the film that he is the finger man in a murder plot whereby the tycoon is systematically destroying all who can reveal his criminal past as soon as they are identified. Poorly acted, written, and recorded, with Welles himself dubbing in the

(left) Rita Hayworth, Everett Sloane, and Orson Welles in *The Lady from Shanghai* (Orson Welles, 1948): frames from the shootout sequence.



Orson Welles, Janet Leigh, and Akim Tamiroff in *Touch of Evil* (Orson Welles, 1958).

voices of most of the other characters, *Mr. Arkadin* is an ambitious and intermittently brilliant failure.

No such difficulties attend *Touch of Evil* (1958), for which Welles returned to Hollywood for the first time in ten years. Universal, still a minor studio, had signed Welles and Charlton Heston to play the leads in what was to be a conventional police melodrama, and Heston insisted that Welles also direct. Welles accepted the job and was permitted to rewrite the script, turning it into a nightmarish parable of the abuse of power in a dark and sinister world. Shot against the garish background of Venice, California, *Touch of Evil* is another study of a man similar to Kane, Macbeth, and Arkadin, whose obsession with control causes him to transgress the laws of the moral universe. Hank Quinlan (Welles), a police captain in a seamy Mexican-American border town, has spent thirty years framing murder suspects about whose guilt he had "a hunch" in order to ensure their conviction. He ultimately runs afoul of an honest Mexican narcotics agent (Heston) who exposes his practices and indirectly causes his death. The grotesque, inflated, yet somehow sympathetic Quinlan is superbly played by Welles as a man whose once strong character has been utterly corrupted by an obsession.

As a director, Welles demanded the impossible from the cinematographer Russell Metty (who also shot *The Stranger*) and got it. The film opens with a continuous moving crane shot (unfortunately obscured in the release print by the credits), which begins with a close-up of a time bomb and ends with the explosion of the device in a car nearly two and a half minutes later, making it one of the longest unbroken tracking shots attempted

before the advent of the Steadicam. Later, Metty was required to track his camera from the exterior of a building through a lobby and into a crowded elevator, and then ride up five floors to shoot Heston greeting the occupants as the doors slide open from within. There is also significant use of deep-focus photography and sound montage for the first time since *The Lady from Shanghai* (1948). Like Welles's previous films, *Touch of Evil* was shot in high-contrast black and white. Ignored in every country but France (where it won the Cannes Grand Prix) in the year of its release, *Touch of Evil* is today considered a Welles masterpiece, whose technical brilliance and thematic depth bring it close to the stature of *Kane*.

When it was released, the film was cut from one hundred and eight to ninety-five minutes under the supervision of Universal postproduction head Ernest Nims to make its editing continuity easier for contemporary audiences to follow. In 1998, producer Rick Schmidlin located a fifty-eight-page memo that Welles had sent to Universal executives after seeing the studio's cut in 1958, detailing changes he wanted them to make in the release print. Schmidlin recruited Academy Award–winning editor and sound designer Walter Murch to re-edit the film as specified in Welles's memo and remaster the sound track. This version, which entails about fifty editorial changes and removes the credits from the opening sequence shot, was released by Universal theatrically in 1998 and on DVD in 2000.

Yet the film's financial failure in 1958 confirmed Welles's status as a pariah in Hollywood; he returned to Europe, where French producers offered him an opportunity to direct a film based on a major literary work of his choice. He selected Kafka's novel *The Trial*, published in 1925. Despite budgeting problems, *The Trial* (1962) became the only one of his films since *Kane* over which Welles exercised total control. His customary visual complexity notwithstanding, the results are disappointing. Shot in black and white in the streets of Zagreb, Croatia (then Yugoslavia), and in the fantastic Gare d'Orsay in Paris, the film finally fails to evoke the antiseptic modern hell of Kafka's novel, perhaps because of some disparity between the worldviews of the two artists.

Welles's next European film and his last completed feature, *Chimes at Midnight* (British title: *Falstaff*, 1966), is widely regarded as a masterpiece. Returning to an idea that he had first tried in his 1938 Theater Guild production *Five Kings*, Welles assembled all of the Falstaff parts from *Henry IV*, *Parts I* and *II*; *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; and *Henry V*, and linked them together with a narration from Holinshed's *Chronicles* (the proximate source of Shakespeare's history plays) to create a portrait of the character as his privileged friendship with Prince Hal passes gradually from affection to bitterness, disillusionment, and decay. Like *Citizen Kane*, it is a film about decline and loss, and like *The Magnificent Ambersons*, it is full of nostalgia for a vanished past, but it is as much the work of an older man as *Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons* are the work of a younger one. Shot in Spain (for financial reasons) over a period of several years, *Chimes at Midnight* is superbly photographed and acted, with Welles at his best in the title role. Its moving crane shots have been widely praised, and the lengthy montage sequence depicting the Battle of Shrewsbury has been favorably compared to Eisenstein's Odessa-steps sequence in *Potemkin* (1925) and the battle on the ice in *Alexander Nevski* (1938). Yet *Chimes at Midnight* is anything but technically extravagant. It is rather a quiet, elegiac, and dignified film whose restrained style and austere black-and-white photography correspond perfectly with its sober themes of human frailty, mortality, and decay.

Welles made several important films of less than feature length as well. The hour-long *The Immortal Story* (*Une histoire immortelle*, 1968), based on a novella by Isak Dinesen, was written and directed by Welles for France's national television company ORTF and was his first film in color. *The Deep* (also known as *Dead Calm* or *Dead Reckoning*) was written and directed by Welles and shot by Gary Graver off the coast of Yugoslavia between 1967 and 1969. Based on the 1963 novel *Dead Calm* by Charles Williams (also adapted under that title by Phillip Noyce in 1989), the film stars Welles, Jeanne Moreau, and Laurence Harvey but is still unreleased because of continuity gaps.

In 1969, Welles shot an abridged color adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* in Croatia and Italy, which was completed but remains unreleased due to the theft of two of its reels. Finally—and most significant—Welles wrote and co-directed, with the French documentarist François Reichenbach, *F for Fake* (1975), a hybrid documentary about the dynamics of fakery, focused on the famous art forger Elmyr de Hory and his fraudulent biographer, Clifford Irving.

It is no longer possible—as it was, perhaps, a generation ago—to speak of Orson Welles as a director important for a single, if monumental and awe-inspiring, film. Welles produced five masterpieces—*Citizen Kane*, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, *The Lady from Shanghai*, *Touch of Evil*, and *Chimes at Midnight*—and his Shakespearean films, extravagant and eccentric as they sometimes are, represent major contributions to the genre. In *Citizen Kane*, he



Keith Baxter as Prince Hal on the battlefield at Shrewsbury in *Chimes at Midnight* (Orson Welles, 1966).

gave us the first modern sound film and effectively pioneered the aesthetic of the long take, or composition in depth. All of his films of the 1940s significantly anticipated the contemporary cinema of widescreen photography and stereophonic sound. Yet technological wizardry notwithstanding, Welles produced a body of work that deserves to be ranked with the great narrative art of classical Western literature: the corrupting nature of ambition; the disparity between social and psychological reality; the destructive power of self-delusion, appetite, and obsession; and the importance of a sense of the past. Confirming these thematic concerns was his intermittent work from 1955 until his death in 1985 on a version of *Don Quixote* set in modern times. Stylistically, however, Welles was always an innovator and a radical experimenter—an authentic American Expressionist with a decidedly baroque sense of form who profoundly influenced the course of Western cinema.

When he died, Welles was working on a long-cherished project—his own adaptation of *King Lear* in video, with himself in the title role—which also remained unfinished. Welles's death on October 10, 1985, was mourned around the world, appropriately, as the passing of a twentieth-century American genius. It is difficult to know who or what to blame for the wasteful attenuation of his later career, and it is probably better not to guess. Yet surely Welles would have appreciated the irony in the fact that only his death would make a whole generation of Americans aware that its favorite public fat man and talk-show raconteur was the single most important architect of the modern film. As Jean-Luc Godard observed of him at the height of the French New Wave, "Everyone will always owe him everything."



La terra trema (*The Earth Trembles*; Luchino Visconti, 1948).



11

Wartime and Postwar Cinema: Italy and the United States, 1940–1951

The Effects of War

World War II left the national cinemas of Western Europe in a state of economic, physical, and psychological paralysis. Cinema is an industry, and industries are dependent for their survival on the stability of the economic systems in which they function. The Nazis had destroyed the shaky prewar economy of Europe and set up another in its place. That in turn was destroyed by the Allied victory in the spring of 1945. Until the Marshall Plan for the economic rehabilitation of Europe began to take effect in 1948–1949, national industries of all types found it impossible to resume production on a large scale.

Furthermore, the physical devastation that the war wreaked on the European film industries was immense. In England, air raids destroyed 330 film theaters, or close to 25 percent of the total number. Germany lost nearly 60 percent of its film-production facilities in the firebombing of Berlin. And in France, which had managed to maintain fairly high standards of film production during the German Occupation, the industry was reduced to a state of chaos by the Allied bombardment of Paris and street fighting during

the liberation of the city in August 1944. In all of Europe, only the Italian film industry was left with its production facilities reasonably intact, a result of Italy's early surrender and the unique circumstances of its liberation.

More devastating to the cinema than either economic instability or the physical destruction of facilities, however, was the state of psychological and moral collapse in which Europe found itself immediately following the Nazi surrender. It is estimated that World War II killed more than 48 million people in Europe and created more than 21 million refugees. Whole urban districts, with nearly their entire civilian populations, had been wiped out in minutes by firebombing and the artifacts of centuries-old civilizations reduced to rubble. Indeed, at least 35 percent of all permanent dwellings in Western Europe were destroyed by the war.

Liberation was joyful when it came, but the experience of Nazi barbarism left a dark imprint on the European consciousness, and the revelation of the true extent of Nazi atrocities in the occupied territories was nothing less than shattering. In one large province of the Soviet Union, for example, 40 percent of the inhabitants had been deported to death camps, and Poland lost 25 percent of its entire population to the camps.

The German-born sociologist and philosopher Theodor Adorno, himself a refugee from Hitler, was moved to state that there could be "no poetry after Auschwitz," and indeed, for a while there could not. Still, the human spirit rekindles quickly. Economies, however, most frequently do not, and until the benefits of the Marshall Plan began to be felt, the European national cinemas, except for that of Italy, were unable to approach anything like their prewar levels of production. In Italy, the revitalization of the national cinema was set in motion even before the war had ended.

Italy

The Italian Cinema before Neorealism

When the Fascists, under Benito Mussolini, seized power in 1922, Italian cinema had already fallen far from the position of international leadership it held during the early silent period. Epic spectacles such as Enrico Guazzoni's world-famous *Quo vadis?* (1913) and Giovanni Pastrone's *Cabiria* (1914) were a thing of the past, and by the time sound arrived in 1930, Italian studios were producing only a handful of features per year, the majority of which were either American-style romantic comedies—*telefono bianco* (white telephone) films—or family melodramas. Yet the Fascists, aware of cinema's immense potential for propaganda, were committed to reviving the Italian industry and putting it in the service of the state.

A former Marxist, Mussolini was particularly impressed by the Soviet achievement in blending film and politics (he even paraphrased Lenin in calling cinema *"l'arma più forte"*—"the strongest weapon"—of the age), and he sought to reorganize the Italian industry along Soviet lines. In 1924, Mussolini founded L'Unione Cinematografica Educativa (LUCE), a state film service to produce documentaries and newsreels about his regime for the purpose of "civil and national education." Then, gradually but deliberately, he cultivated financial relations with the private sector, culminating in the creation of the Ente Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche (ENIC) in 1935 as a centralized bureaucracy to control the distribution and exhibition of all films within the Fascist state.

The following year, Mussolini ordered the establishment of a national film school (unprecedented outside of the Soviet Union), the Centro Sperimentale della Cinematografia, and authorized the construction of the vast **Cinecittà** studios in Rome, whose size and technical facilities rivaled those of UFA-Neubabelsberg, with sixteen soundstages; 600,000 square meters for exteriors; and corridor upon corridor of dressing rooms. To emphasize the importance of film to his regime, Mussolini personally inaugurated the facility in 1937—on April 21, the mythical date of the founding of Rome—and within a year, Cinecittà had released more than eighty films, doubling the rate of Italian film production.

Meanwhile, the Centro Sperimentale, under the direction of the filmmaker Luigi Chiarini (1900–1975), a covert Marxist, had attracted such promising students as Roberto Rossellini, Luigi Zampa, Pietro Germi, Giuseppe De Santis, and Michelangelo Antonioni—all to become major directors of the postwar cinema—and had begun to publish its own theoretical journal, *Bianco e nero* (*Black and White*), which remains Italy's premier academic film journal to this day.

A rival periodical called *Cinema* was soon founded under the editorship of Vittorio Mussolini, son of Il Duce. *Cinema* published translations of the major theoretical writings of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Balázs, as well as contributions from native talents such as the young Luchino Visconti. Finally, to further upgrade and increase production, Mussolini attempted to establish a wholly protected industry by imposing strict import quotas on foreign films, and when Italy entered the war in 1940, he banned American films altogether.



Calligraphism: Massimo Serato and Alida Valli in *Piccolo mondo antico* (*Little Ancient World*; Mario Soldati, 1941).

During the first year of the war, Italian production reached the all-time high of eighty-six films per annum.

The cinema subsidized by Mussolini and his Fascist state was an enormously popular success. This cinema's most salient artistic feature was what the neorealist film critic and director Giuseppe De Santis (1917–1997) designated as **calligraphism**—a sort of decorative, pictorial formalism that manifested itself in meticulously photographed adaptations of late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century fiction. In many ways the antithesis of neorealism, calligraphism nevertheless provided a training ground for scriptwriters, technicians, performers, and other creative personnel associated with it. So too, ironically, did the Fascist propaganda documentary of the period.

Francesco De Robertis (1902–1959), as head of the film section of the naval ministry, was responsible for several semi-documentary feature films that anticipated neorealism in their use of nonprofessional actors, on-location shooting, and a photographic style similar to that of contemporary newsreels. In *Uomini sul fondo* (*Men on the Bottom*; English title: *S.O.S. Submarine*), which he directed as his first feature in 1941, De Robertis re-created the undersea rescue of a disabled Italian submarine so authentically that critics all over the country took note. In the same year, he supervised the production of *La nave bianca* (*The White Ship*), which realistically reconstructed life aboard an Italian hospital ship by combining staged scenes with actual footage and gave Roberto Rossellini (1906–1977) his first job directing a feature film. The influence of De Robertis was mainly technical, however, for he was a devout Fascist whose worldview was in no way compatible with the liberal humanism that neorealism came to espouse.

More attuned to neorealism conceptually was the middle-class comedy of manners as practiced by Alessandro Blasetti (1900–1987) in *Quattro passi fra le nuvole* (*Four Steps in the Clouds*, 1942) and Vittorio De Sica in *I bambini ci guardano* (*The Children Are Watching Us*, 1942). Although both films are elaborations of an older genre perfected by Mario Camerini (1895–1981) in the 1930s and are slightly flawed by sentimentality, they are notable for their studied social observation and their realistic scripts by the Marxist screenwriter Cesare Zavattini (1902–1989), who was shortly to become to neorealism what Carl Mayer had been to the *Kammerspielfilm*—its chief ideological spokesman and major scenarist.



Quattro passi fra le nuvole (*Four Steps in the Clouds*; Alessandro Blasetti, 1942).

The Foundations of Neorealism

Zavattini was the theoretical founder of neorealism. In 1942, he called for a new kind of Italian film—one that would abolish contrived plots, do away with professional actors, and take to the streets for its material in order to establish direct contact with contemporary social reality. Plot was inauthentic, according to Zavattini, because it imposed an artificial structure on "everyday life," and professional actors simply compounded the falsehood because "to want one person to play another implies the calculated plot." It was precisely the dignity and sacredness of the everyday life of ordinary people, so alien to the heroic ideal of Fascism, that Zavattini demanded that the new realism capture. As he was to write later of the emergence of neorealism: "The reality buried under the myths slowly reflowered. The cinema began its creation of the world. Here was a tree; here, an old man; here, a house; here, a man eating, a man sleeping, a man crying. . . . The cinema . . . should accept, unconditionally, what is contemporary. *Today, today, today*."

In early 1943, Umberto Barbaro (1902–1959), an influential critic and lecturer at the Centro Sperimentale, published an article that attacked the reactionary conventions of the Italian film and invoked the term *neorealism* to refer to what was lacking. Barbaro's specific allusion was to French poetic realism—the 1930s cinema of Renoir, Carné, Duvivier, and Clair—but the term was soon picked up by Giuseppe De Santis and other progressive critics at *Bianco e nero* and *Cinema* to designate the revolutionary agitation for a popular and realistic national cinema that was soon to sweep the Italian film schools, cinema clubs, and critical journals. The influences on the young men demanding a "new realism" were many and varied. For one thing, most of them were clandestine Marxists, in addition to being professionally trained film critics, and the "realism" they wished to renew was quite specifically the Soviet expressive realism of Eisenstein, Pudovkin,

and Dovzhenko. This influence was less technical than ideological, however, and the stylistic resemblances between Italian neorealism and Soviet expressive realism, although they do exist, are slight.

A more direct and practical influence on the neorealist movement was French poetic realism, which had achieved international preeminence by 1939. In addition to being technically brilliant, the films of poetic realism espoused a kind of socialist humanism that the Italians found at least as appealing as strident Soviet Marxism. *Toni* (1934), Jean Renoir's drama of immigrant Italian laborers shot on location in the south of France with nonprofessional actors, provided an important structural model.

Furthermore, several major directors of the neorealist cinema actually served their apprenticeships under French filmmakers. Luchino Visconti (1906–1976), for example, had been an assistant on Renoir's *Une partie de campagne* (1936; released 1946), as well as a scriptwriter for the version of *La Tosca* (1940) begun by Renoir and completed by Carl Koch; and Michelangelo Antonioni had worked as an assistant to Marcel Carné on *Les visiteurs du soir* (1942). Most significant of all, perhaps, is the fact that the cinema of poetic realism represented aesthetic and intellectual freedom to young Italian artists trapped in the hothouse atmosphere of the Fascist studios. Many, like Rossellini, had begun their careers as government loyalists but turned bitterly against the regime, as they were forced to make compromise after compromise to Fascist policy and public taste.

The Allies invaded Sicily in July 1943, and Mussolini was turned out of office by his own party. An armistice was then signed with the Allies, whose forces landed on the mainland and began their sweep up the peninsula. To add to the confusion, the new Italian government, under Marshal Badoglio, declared war on Germany, while in the north of Italy Mussolini was installed as the head of a Nazi puppet state called the Salo Republic. Partisan fighting erupted everywhere, the Nazis occupied Rome, and the Allied movement northward was slowed. Rome did not fall until June 1944, and even then it took another year of heavy fighting to effect the Germans' unconditional surrender.

Yet in the midst of this chaos, Fascist control of the Italian film studios relaxed somewhat, and the armistice of 1943 had no sooner been signed than neorealism was heralded by the release of Luchino Visconti's grim tale of passion and murder in modern Italy, *Ossessione* (*Obsession*). *Ossessione* was based (without



Clara Calamai and Massimo Girotti in *Ossessione* (*Obsession*; Luchino Visconti, 1943).

permission) on the luridly poetic thriller *The Postman Always Rings Twice* by the American novelist James M. Cain; it could not be shown outside of Italy until 1976 because it infringed the author's copyright. The novel is a violent tale of sexual obsession and corruption in which a young drifter contracts an affair with the sensual wife of the owner of a roadside cafe. Together, they murder the husband for his insurance money, but they are later trapped in their own deceptions. Visconti retained the melodramatic plot and the brutal characters but transferred the setting to the contemporary Italian countryside near Ferrara, whose bleakness, provinciality, and poverty he captured with great fidelity.

Clearly, the technical virtuosity of *Ossessione* would have made it an important film under any circumstances, but coming as it did on the heels of the neorealist manifestos of Zavattini and Barbaro, it seemed to validate their notion that a new Italian cinema was about to be born—one that would take its cameras out of the studios and into the streets and the countryside to probe the lives of ordinary men and women in relation to their environment. (The same could be said of *La terra trema* [*The Earth Trembles*, 1948], the first part of a never-completed trilogy Visconti had planned on the economic problems of fishing, mining, and agriculture in postwar Sicily; Visconti continued to produce eccentric, operatic masterpieces after his neorealist phase until his death in 1976.) Thus, *Ossessione* can be said to have provided the blueprint for neorealism. It anticipated some of the movement's themes and styles (popular setting, realistic treatment, social content), though lacking the neorealist political commitment and historical perspective.

Unfortunately, however, political and economic circumstances intervened to make the film less immediately influential than it might have been. The Fascist censors still controlled the industry, and although they had originally approved the project, they were shocked at the harsh portrait of Italian provincial life Visconti had painted. Their response was to ban the film and subsequently release it in a version cut to less than half its original length. Visconti reconstructed *Ossessione* after the war, but even then, the film could not be shown abroad due to its copyright violation. For this reason, the first Italian neorealist film to reach the other countries of the West was Roberto Rossellini's *Roma, città aperta* (*Rome, Open City*, 1945).

Neorealism: Major Figures and Films

A remarkable film of Italian resistance and Nazi reprisal *Roma, città aperta* was based on events that had occurred in Rome in the winter of 1943–1944, when the Germans declared that the city was "open." It tells the story of a Communist underground leader who brings death to himself and his friends in a vain but heroic attempt to outlast a Gestapo manhunt. The film was planned in the midst of the Nazi occupation by Rossellini and his associates, several of whom were actively involved in the Resistance at the time. Shooting began only weeks after Rome's liberation. Because Cinecittà had been damaged by Allied bombing, only two studio sets were used in the entire film, and the rest was shot on location in the streets of Rome, where the events it dramatized had actually taken place.

In the interest of speed, Rossellini shot *Roma, città aperta* silently and dubbed in the actors' voices after it was edited. Moreover, because his film stock was of relatively low quality (Rossellini having bought it piecemeal from street photographers and spliced it onto motion-picture reels), the finished film had the look of a contemporary newsreel. Indeed, many who saw *Roma, città aperta* when it was first released in 1945 thought that they were watching a record of actual events unfolding before the cameras and were astonished that Rossellini could have been permitted to reveal so much of Nazi brutality with the Germans still in Rome. They were equally amazed at the intelligence, integrity, and technical ingenuity of the film because, as far as international audiences were aware, these qualities had been absent from the Italian cinema since 1922, when the Fascists came to power.

For all of these reasons, and because it has an appealing melodramatic plot line, *Roma, città aperta* enjoyed immense success in almost every country in the Western world. In the United States alone, its distributors grossed more than half a million dollars, and in Italy it was the most profitable film since the outbreak of the war. Furthermore, *Roma, città aperta* won major prizes in a number of international film festivals, including the Grand Prix at Cannes in 1946, and critical acclaim for it was very nearly universal.

Roma, città aperta is one of those watershed films, such as *The Birth of a Nation*, *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari*, *Battleship Potemkin*, and *Citizen Kane*, that changed the course of Western cinema. Rossellini's film became the paradigm for Italian neorealism and set the standard for everything that succeeded it—in its achievement of a documentary surface through on-location shooting and postsynchronization of sound, its mixture of professional performers (Anna Magnani and Aldo Fabrizi) and nonprofessionals, its references to contemporary national experience (or, at least, very recent national history), its social commitment and

(top right) Pina (Anna Magnani) accosted by the SS in *Roma, città aperta* (*Rome, Open City*; Roberto Rossellini, 1945).
(bottom right) *Paisà* (*Paisan*; Roberto Rossellini, 1946).





humanistic point of view, and above all, what Penelope Houston called its "driving urge" to rehabilitate the national reputation.

Rossellini's next two films confirmed his mastery of the neorealist mode and extended his commitment to his country's recent past. *Paisà* (*Paisan*, 1946), like its predecessor, was written by Rossellini, Amidei, and Fellini. It recounts six unrelated episodes in the liberation of Italy, from the American landing in Sicily in 1943 to the Nazi evacuation of the Po Valley in 1945, and was shot on location all over the country: in Sicily, Naples, Rome, Florence, and the Po delta. Unlike *Roma, città aperta*, *Paisà* was a costly venture (in fact, the most expensive Italian film of 1946). Nevertheless, Rossellini once again combined professional and nonprofessional actors, and he improvised part of his script to create what James Agee called in a contemporary review of *Paisà* "the illusion of the present tense." Like *Roma, città aperta*, the film contains flaws of structure, but in its authentic representation of common people caught up in the madness and horror of war, *Paisà* validates the broadly humanistic worldview of neorealism and confirms the effectiveness of its improvisatory techniques. (Seeing *Paisà* for the first time had a formative influence on numerous future directors, including Ermanno Olmi, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, and Gillo Pontecorvo, by their own admission; see Chapter 15.)

Rossellini's next film, the final one in what is often called his "war trilogy," was *Germania, anno zero* (*Germany, Year Zero*, 1947). Shot on location in bombed-out Berlin and acted entirely by nonprofessionals, the film is an attempt to probe the social roots of Fascism through the contrived story of a young German boy corrupted by Nazism who murders his bedridden father and commits suicide in the wake of the German defeat. Its specifically neorealistic elements have been widely praised. For example, the long, nearly wordless concluding sequence in which the boy wanders through a gutted Berlin toward his personal *Götterdämmerung* is frequently cited as one of the glories of Italian neorealist cinema. In the end, however, that cinema proved nontransplantable in alien soil, and the relative failure of *Germania, anno zero*—both commercially and critically—foreshadowed the larger failure of the neorealist movement to transcend its specific social and historical contexts.

Rossellini did not attempt another film in the neorealist vein, but he outlasted the movement to become a major figure in world cinema. (In addition to future Italian filmmakers, Rossellini's work exercised an enormous influence on the young *cinéastes* of the French New Wave and on the *cinéma vérité* movement.)

The second major director of the Italian neorealist movement, and one who worked within it until its demise in the 1950s, was Vittorio De Sica (1901–1974). A matinee idol during the "white telephone" era of the 1930s, De Sica began his directing career near the end of that decade with a number of conventional middle-class comedies, at least one of which—*I bambini ci guardano* (*The Children Are Watching Us*, 1942)—anticipates the neorealist concern with social problems. This film



Antonio Ricci (Lamberto Maggiorani) and his son Bruno (Enzo Staiola) in *Ladri di biciclette* (*Bicycle Thieves/The Bicycle Thief*; Vittorio De Sica, 1948).

began De Sica's collaboration and lifelong friendship with the scriptwriter and theoretician of neorealism Cesare Zavattini. Though De Sica's sensibility was essentially comic, he apparently fell under the influence of Zavattini's ideas sometime during the war, for in 1946 the two men began a series of films concentrating on the urban problems of postwar Italy.

Sciuscià (*Shoeshine*, 1946), shot in three months under primitive conditions, is a bleak tale of the corruption of innocence in Nazi-occupied Rome. Two young shoeshine boys who are best friends become involved in a black-market deal in an effort to buy a horse. They are caught and sent to prison, where one inadvertently betrays the other and is later killed by him in revenge. Like *Roma, città aperta, Sciuscià* was not well received in Italy but proved highly successful in the United States, where it won a special Academy Award in 1947.

De Sica's next film with Zavattini, *Ladri di biciclette* (*Bicycle Thieves/The Bicycle Thief*, 1948), received even greater international acclaim and is thought by some critics to be the most important film of the postwar era. In it, a family man who has been out of work for almost two years (unemployment in postwar Italy had reached 22 percent by 1948) finds a job as a municipal bill poster, for which he must provide his own transportation. He pawns the family's sheets in order to buy a bicycle, which is stolen his first day out. For the rest of the film, he and his little boy search in vain for the thief; near the conclusion, the man is driven to steal a bicycle himself but is caught in the act.

Shot on location in Rome with nonactors in the leading roles (the protagonist was played by a factory worker brilliantly coached by De Sica), *Ladri di biciclette* was an international success, winning among other honors the 1949 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, and its rambling narrative form was widely imitated by other directors. As was recognized at the time, the film actually has meaning on several different planes: it is a powerful social document firmly committed to the reality it portrays, a poignant story of the relationship between a father and his son, and a modern parable of alienated man in a hostile

and dehumanized environment. De Sica and Zavattini were to collaborate on two more neorealist endeavors, mixing social protest with fantasy in *Miracolo a Milano* (*Miracle in Milan*, 1951), in the manner of Clair's *Le million* and *À nous la liberté* (both 1931), and giving neorealism its final masterpiece in *Umberto D.* (1952).

Umberto D. probably comes as close to realizing Zavattini's ideal of a pure cinema of everyday life as any film the neorealist movement produced. It has no plot but is structured around a series of loosely connected incidents in the title character's life. Although most of these incidents are generated by a single circumstance (Umberto D. is poor and can't pay his rent), the film begins and ends in medias res because it is about a condition, rather than about a series of events. Filmed on location in Rome with an entirely nonprofessional cast, *Umberto D.* offers a portrait of an old-age pensioner attempting to eke out a meager existence for himself and his dog in a furnished room, while retaining a modicum of personal dignity. The fragile equilibrium Umberto has managed to maintain between mere want and degrading poverty is destroyed when his callous landlady, in an effort to drive him out, demands that he pay his back rent in a lump sum. Umberto sells what few possessions he has, attempts to borrow money from ex-colleagues (he is apparently a retired civil servant), and even tries to beg, but finds it impossible to raise the amount he needs. Finally, after the landlady has publicly humiliated him by letting his room to prostitutes and has all but thrown him out onto the street, Umberto resolves to commit suicide. He ultimately fails, however, because he can't bring himself to abandon his dog. The conclusion leaves the two alive together, but with no place to go and no prospects for the future.

Obviously, a film about a downtrodden old man and his dog is prone to be sentimental by its very nature, and *Umberto D.* does not avoid this pitfall (no neorealist film about victimized people ever did). Yet most of the emotion the film contains is honest enough, because De Sica and Zavattini do not attempt to make their protagonist seem better or nobler than he is. Umberto can be thoroughly disagreeable, and he is in most respects an average person. It is true, of course, that *Umberto D.* is a closely observed social document that comments on the hypocrisy, cruelty, and indifference of bourgeois society toward its own aged members, but as in the earlier De Sica–Zavattini collaborations, an examination of emotional relationships lies at the center of the film. In *Sciuscià*, the crucial relationship was that between the two young shoeshine boys; in *Ladri di biciclette*, between the father and son. In *Umberto D.*, however, the only significant relationship is that of the protagonist and his dog, as if to imply that relationships between human beings have become increasingly difficult or even impossible in our emotionally attenuated modern society.

Others have found *Umberto D.* less pessimistic than this comment suggests, but it seems clear that its commercial failure was a direct result of the grim view it took of contemporary life. In the year of its release, in fact, some Italian politicians, notably Giulio Andreotti (see below), attempted to prohibit the film's exportation on the grounds that it presented a falsely gloomy picture of Italian society. (De Sica's career declined after this film, although he continued to work closely with Zavattini until the end of it.)

The Decline of Neorealism

Neorealism in Zavattini's ideal sense—"the ideal film would be ninety minutes of the life of a man to whom nothing happens"—probably never existed. In practice, it was a cinema of poverty and pessimism firmly rooted in the immediate postwar period. When times changed and economic conditions began to improve, neorealism lost first its ideological basis, then its subject matter. Yet even if Italy had remained unchanged from *Roma, città aperta* to *Umberto D.*, the neorealist cinema would have failed for other reasons. In the first place, for all of its collectivist aspirations, neorealism had never been a popular cinema in Italy and was dependent on foreign markets for its survival—especially the United States.

The Italian film industry experienced a major crisis in 1949 due to the wholesale importation of American films. (Sociologist George Huaco found that only 10 percent of the feature films exhibited in Italy in December of that year were Italian, while 71 percent were American.) The government then passed the protective Andreotti Law, named for Giulio Andreotti, the undersecretary of public entertainment. *La legge Andreotti* taxed imported films and required theaters to show Italian films for eighty days of the year, thus tripling domestic distribution. It also established the Direzione Generale del Spettacolo, which was empowered to grant government-subsidized production loans to scripts submitted for prior approval that were found "suitable" and to ban from both domestic screening and exportation films deemed inimical to the "best interests of Italy."

The Andreotti Law, then, placed the Italian film industry under state control, and when the government became openly hostile to neorealism in the early 1950s, backing for projects dried up altogether. Since Italy joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)



(left) Carlo Battisti in the title role in *Umberto D.* (Vittorio De Sica, 1952).

in March 1949, some have speculated that the Andreotti Law was enacted with the implicit purpose of slowly strangling neorealism, whose ideological orientation was Marxist. Yet it also seems clear that neorealism had burned itself out internally before the Andreotti Law had any significant effect on production.

In their desire to achieve "the illusion of the present tense," which James Agee had noted in Rossellini's *Paisà*, the neorealist directors frequently ignored the narrative elements of their films or treated them as irrelevant, causing the plots to degenerate into stereotypes. The same concentration on methodology also resulted in the lapses into sentimentality that led the British critic Raymond Durgnat to label neorealist films the "male weepies," as opposed to the "female weepies" of Hollywood melodramatists such as Vincent Sherman, Irving Rapper, and Daniel Mann.

To all of this it might first be replied that the neorealists were interested not so much in constructing narratives as in reconstructing the atmosphere and ambiance of a contemporary reality, something they achieved admirably. And, as André Bazin suggests in his essay on neorealism called "An Aesthetic of Reality," it is not at all unrespectable or even unusual for an innovative movement in cinema to dissipate its creative energies in a brief span of time. Innovation in an art form whose medium is photographic reproduction and whose influence literally travels with the speed of light is bound to be short-lived (as innovation, that is) and to produce its own reaction rapidly. Yet the real vindication of the neorealist movement has been its influence on the international cinema, which has been enormous.

The Impact of Neorealism

Neorealism completely revitalized Italian film, so that it became one of the major creative forces in world cinema. Not only did neorealism itself produce masterpieces and become the temporary medium for great directors such as Rossellini and Visconti, but it provided training for two men currently thought to be among the international cinema's greatest artists—Federico Fellini (1920–1993), who worked extensively as a scriptwriter on neorealist films (*Roma, città aperta*; *Paisà*; *Senza pietà*; etc.), and Michelangelo Antonioni (1912–2007), who was writing criticism for *Cinema* and directing documentaries during the same period (e.g., *Gente del Po* [*People of the Po Valley*, 1943]; released 1947, etc.). In their films of the 1950s, especially Fellini's *I vitelloni* (1953) and Antonioni's *Le amiche* (1955), both directors may be said to have continued the neorealist mode by turning it inward, so that the object of attention becomes not society, but the human self. This element of what might be called introspective neorealism largely disappeared from their work in the 1960s, but it is not farfetched to see in their mature images of modern alienation and disorder vestiges of the bombed-out, fragmented neorealist landscapes of the late 1940s.

Neorealism was the first postwar cinema to liberate filmmaking from the artificial confines of the studio and, by extension, from the Hollywood-originated studio system. On-location shooting, the use of nonprofessional actors, and improvisation of scripts, which have all become a part (though not always a large part) of conventional filmmaking today, were techniques almost unknown to the narrative sound film before neorealism. The movement's influence on the French New Wave directors in this regard is a matter of record, but its general impact on American cinema (beyond film noir and the semi-documentary melodrama) has largely been ignored, possibly due to its left-leaning ideological slant.

Finally, scholars have pointed out the profound influence of neorealism on filmmakers in countries that lacked strong national cinemas of their own, especially the underdeveloped nations of the Third World—for example, the canonical Indian director Satyajit Ray (1921–1992), who made the Apu trilogy (1955–1959). Ray claimed that a single viewing of De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette* in London in 1950 led him to film his trilogy according to neorealist methods. It is clear that neorealism was a great deal more than a localized national phenomenon; its formative influence extended well beyond Italian cinema. There can be no question today that whatever its limitations of vision and form, Italian neorealism was one of the great innovative movements in the history of the cinema, whose importance and impact are comparable in degree to that of Soviet silent realism or the French New Wave, between which it most appropriately mediates.

The United States

Hollywood at War

Like Italian cinema, American film had been moving toward a heightened kind of realism in the early 1940s, when the war interrupted and Hollywood was pressed

into the service of the federal government. On December 18, 1941, immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor and America's declaration of war on Japan, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established a Bureau of Motion Picture Affairs (BMPA) within the Office of War Information (OWI) to mobilize the studios for the national defense effort.

Hollywood responded by creating the War Activities Committee, comprising studio executives, distributors, exhibitors, actors, and labor-union officials, to coordinate American filmmaking activity with the propaganda and morale-boosting programs of the government. The government suggested six thematic categories for Hollywood films that would be consonant with its war-aims information campaign but would not preclude conventional entertainment values. As listed by Lewis Jacobs, these were:

1. The Issues of the War—what we are fighting for, the American way of life;
2. The Nature of the Enemy—its ideology, objectives, methods;
3. The "United Nations"—that is, our allies in arms;
4. The Production Front—supplying the materials for victory;
5. The Home Front—civilian responsibility; and
6. The Fighting Forces—our armed services, allies, and associates.

Hollywood complied at first by producing a raft of fatuous, superpatriotic melodramas of the battlefield and the home front that glorified a kind of warfare that had never existed in the history of the human race, much less in the current upheaval. These unsophisticated films disappeared rapidly from American screens when Hollywood and the general public were confronted with an infinitely more authentic version of the war, contained in newsreels from the battlefronts and government-produced information films.

From 1941 to 1945, the War Department, the Army Pictorial Services, the Army Educational Program, the American Armed Forces (AAF) First Motion Picture Unit, the Signal Corps of the combined services, the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Marine Corps, and the Overseas Branch of OWI were involved in the production of documentary films designed to explain and justify the war to the servicemen fighting it and the civilian populace actively supporting it. Major Hollywood directors, such as Frank Capra, John Huston, John Ford, George Stevens, and William Wyler, had been recruited into the armed forces, together with professional documentarists, such as Willard Van Dyke (1906–1986) and Irving Lerner (1909–1976), to operate these programs, and the films they produced collectively are among the most outstanding documentaries in the history of the form.

The seven films of the Why We Fight series, produced by Frank Capra, for example, were documentaries edited from stock footage that persuasively and unromantically explained the necessity of America's involvement in the war. Other information films were shot on location in every theater of operations in the war and constitute masterly pieces of reporting. The characteristic feature of these films was their sobriety. War was shown to be a brutal, unglamorous, and murderous business. Vast numbers of Americans saw these documentaries at home and overseas, and there can be little doubt that they did much to upgrade the realism and honesty with which Hollywood approached the war.

The years 1943 and 1944 witnessed many films whose presentation of the war and attendant themes was much more convincing than that of their predecessors. Whereas earlier films had caricatured Fascists as either cowardly buffoons or stock villains, other films of the period—for example, Frank Capra's *Meet John Doe* (1941), Fritz Lang's *Ministry of Fear* (1944), and Alfred Hitchcock's semi-allegorical *Lifeboat* (1944)—portrayed the dangers of Fascism abroad and on the home front with a sophisticated understanding of the ruthlessness, intelligence, and actual power of the enemy. Another group of films provided a more realistic treatment than heretofore of "our allies in arms," attempting with varying degrees of success to show what life was like inside the occupied countries and to promote a bond of sympathy with them. Other films, such as Lewis Milestone's *The North Star* (1943), Gregory Ratoff's *Song of Russia* (1943), Jacques Tourneur's *Days of Glory* (1944), and Michael Curtiz's *Mission to Moscow* (1943), attempted to promote goodwill between America and its incongruous new ally, the Soviet Union—in the case of *Mission to Moscow*, by (shamefully) attempting to rationalize Stalin's purge trials of the late 1930s.

Perhaps the most telling index of the documentary influence on American cinema during the war years was the increasing number of serious-minded and realistic combat films that portrayed the war very much as it must have seemed to the men who were fighting it. Indeed, one of the reasons that Hollywood outgrew its post–Pearl Harbor romanticism so quickly was a massive GI reaction against the patent phoniness of the early war films.

Yet by 1944, the true horror and anguish of warfare, devoid of flag-waving jingoism, was being brought home



Why We Fight series: *The Battle of Russia* (Frank Capra and Anatole Litvak, 1943).

to Americans in a breed of films that used battle action for a more personal kind of cinema. The focus of these films, such as Tay Garnett's *Bataan* (1943), Lewis Selier's *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), and Lewis Milestone's *A Walk in the Sun* (1945), was the crisis of the individual GI coming to terms with his own conscience amid the global slaughterhouse that the war had become. In their focus on the individual American in conflict with himself or herself, these productions anticipate the searching, introspective, and ultimately disillusioned films of the immediate postwar period, in which the democratic ideals for which so many Americans fought and died are brought into serious question.

In 1945, however, with the end of the war clearly in sight, battle themes were jettisoned for lighter material that would coincide with the momentary mood of public euphoria; and for a brief season on the American screen, following the Japanese surrender on August 14, 1945, it was as if the war had never taken place at all. (In fiscal year 1941–1942, 6 of the 21 top-grossing films had had some connection with the war; in 1942–1943, 1943–1944, 1944–1945, 1945–1946, and 1946–1947, respectively, the ratio fell as follows: 13 of 24, 12 of 25, 6 of 34, 2 of 36, and 1 of 26.)

The war had not been unkind to Hollywood, however, even though it had lost its foreign markets and had devoted nearly one-third of its production between 1941 and 1945 to the war effort. Hollywood had even complied with the government's discomfiting request to reduce the length of A-films on double bills to economize on theater lighting. Nevertheless, Hollywood enjoyed the most profitable four-year period in its history during the war, with weekly attendance estimated at 90 million people (nearly five times the current figure), despite the restrictions imposed on it by the government and its own errors of judgment about what the public wanted to see. For one thing, all of its combat films were (and, with few exceptions, still are) produced with the "technical assistance" of the armed forces, which can be worth up to 50 percent of a motion



Dana Andrews in *A Walk in the Sun* (Lewis Milestone, 1945).

picture's budget in free production values. For another, the government had cleverly levied a special war tax on theater tickets in 1942, so that going to the movies during the war years took on the character of a patriotic act. Full employment and unprecedented prosperity after a decade of economic depression also helped keep attendance high. (In most industrial centers, the theaters stayed open twenty-four hours a day to accommodate shift workers.) Yet most important of all, in determining Hollywood's high wartime profits, was the perennial therapeutic function that films assume in periods of social stress.

The Postwar Boom

For all of these reasons, Hollywood came through the war years with its powerful studio production system and time-tested film genres pretty much intact, making the American the only major national cinema in the West to preserve a direct continuity of tradition with its past after 1945. In Europe—even in Italy—national cinemas had to be entirely rebuilt, which in most cases involved a beneficial process of rejuvenation and a subsequent influx of new talent and ideas. Hollywood, however, had experienced the war as the most stable and lucrative four years in its history, with a mere change of pace, and the industry gave every indication that it intended to march into the postwar period in the same way that it had marched out of the Depression—by avoiding the depiction of any of the unpleasant realities of American life.

In 1946, there was much cause for confidence. Victory had opened vast, unchallenged markets in the war-torn countries of Western Europe and Southeast Asia, and Hollywood had already resumed its economic domination of international cinema because only America was in a material position to provide high-quality films to a world hungry for diversion. Moreover, the domestic audience had reached its highest peak ever, at an estimated 100 million per week (two-thirds of the population), and the yearly box-office receipts of $1.75 billion broke all previous records. Thus, by the end of 1946, it seemed that Hollywood's most lucrative path lay in maintaining the prewar status quo, but no sooner had the industry charted this course than serious obstacles began to appear.

An eight-month studio union strike in 1945, combined with spiraling postwar inflation, led to a 25 percent pay increase for studio personnel in the following year. Moreover, Hollywood's chief overseas market, Great Britain, from which it drew one-quarter to one-third of its net income, levied a 75 percent protective tax on all foreign film profits, and this reduced the American industry's annual British revenue from

$68 million in 1946 to less than $17 million in 1947. Other Commonwealth countries and European nations followed suit (Italy, for example, with the Andreotti Law), and even though in some cases Hollywood was able to retaliate successfully with boycotts, the damage was significant. With the end of the War Production Board's price controls in August 1946, the industry's main suppliers of raw film stock, Eastman and du Pont, raised their prices, by 18 and 13 percent, respectively, adding more than $2.5 million in annual costs for the studios.

Most disastrous of all from a financial standpoint, however, was the adjudication of the antitrust suit begun by the federal government against the five major and three minor studios in 1938, resulting in the "Paramount decrees" or "consent decrees" of May 1948—court orders that forced the companies to divest themselves of their lucrative exhibition circuits according to a mutually agreed-on schedule over the next five years. (The Supreme Court held that the majors, in collusion with the minors, had exercised a clear monopoly over motion-picture production, distribution, and exhibition from 1934 to 1947.)

Most immediately, divestiture meant the end of block booking and of the automatic box-office receipts that this practice had created; ultimately, it meant the end of the powerful studio system that had been the shaping force of the American film industry for thirty years. Hollywood was faced with the task of restructuring its entire production-and-delivery system in the midst of the most severe financial crisis it had experienced since the coming of sound. Even worse was to follow, but at the beginning of 1948, things were bad enough: in the major studios, unemployment had risen by 25 percent; the independent companies Rainbow, Liberty, and Eagle-Lion had failed completely; and Warner Bros. was preparing for a temporary shutdown. As early as 1947, radical economizing had begun. Production budgets were cut by as much as 50 percent, and expensive projects, such as costume films, extravagant



Coming home: Dana Andrews, Fredric March, and Harold Russell in *The Best Years of Our Lives* (William Wyler, 1946).

spectacles, and grade-A musicals, were abandoned altogether. Only months after the American film industry's banner year of 1946, Hollywood people were starting to ask themselves how the bubble had burst, unaware that their bad luck had only just begun.

Yet for a while, at least, the urgent necessity to cut back on production costs had a vitalizing and invigorating effect on the American cinema. The industry's perpetual obsession with lavish production values temporarily gave way to a new concern for high-quality scripts and preplanning at every stage of the shooting process to avoid expensive retakes. For the first time in Hollywood's history, studios gave high priority to projects that could be shot on location with small casts and crews, and the content of films thus took on a greater social and psychological realism than ever before. The influence of the wartime documentary tradition and of Italian neorealism, which had earned a high reputation among American filmmakers by 1947, had a great deal to do with this sudden rejection of escapist subject matter, but much of the credit must go to the cultural impact of the war itself on the American people.

After the elation of victory had passed, a mood of disillusionment and cynicism came over America that had at least as much to do with the nation's image of itself as with the distant horror of the war. The federal government's wartime propaganda machine, of which Hollywood was the most essential component, had created an image of an ideal America of white picket fences, cozy bungalows, and patiently loyal families and sweethearts—a pure, democratic society in which Jews, blacks, Italians, Irish, Poles, and WASP farm boys could all live and work together, just as they had done in the ethnically balanced patrol squads of so many wartime combat films. This America, of course, had never existed, but a nation engaged in a global war of survival had an overwhelming need to believe that it did.

When the war ended and the troops returned home, however, people began to discover that the basic goodness and decency of American society were more difficult to find than, for example, John Cromwell's slickly directed domestic fantasy *Since You Went Away* (1944) had made it appear—more difficult even than William Wyler's relatively sophisticated *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), which dealt with the successful attempts of three returned combat veterans to reintegrate themselves into civilian life, made it seem. Less difficult to locate in postwar America were social inequities and racial prejudices in every part of the country, profiteering in big business, and corruption in state and local government. What is more, many of our "boys"—especially those who had been maimed in defense of their country—came home to discover that they couldn't get jobs, obtain loans, or even resume their education.

When the euphoria of victory had passed, America suddenly found itself in worse shape internally than Hollywood or any other element of American society would have dared to suggest during the war. The war was over now, however, and as a result of its self-imposed economies, Hollywood had become increasingly dependent on the talents of individual writers and directors—people whose vision of things was frequently less sanguine than what the studio system, under normal circumstances, would permit them to express. Yet circumstances were not normal for either the industry or the nation, and soon manifestations of America's social malaise began to appear on screens all over the country.

Postwar Genres in the United States

"Social Consciousness" Films and Semi-Documentary Melodramas

The Hollywood films generated by postwar disenchantment with American life were of several basic types. The least complex were those that dealt melioristically with contemporary social problems and their resolution. Often called "social consciousness," or "problem," pictures, these films enjoyed a tremendous vogue in the late 1940s (in 1947, for example, nearly one-third of the films produced in Hollywood had a "problem" content of some sort) and concerned themselves with such subjects as racism, political corruption, and other inequities within our social institutions.

In this category, Edward Dmytryk's *Crossfire* (1947), a tersely directed melodrama of murderous anti-Semitism in postwar America, is outstanding for both its thematic candor and its cinematic excellence. Elia Kazan's *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947) provides a much less honest treatment of the same theme, and his *Pinky* (1949), the sentimental tale of a young black woman who tries to pass for white, is even less credible. Nevertheless, 1949 was a good year for films on racial

(right) Robert Ryan and Robert Young in *Crossfire* (Edward Dmytryk, 1947).





James Edwards in *Home of the Brave* (Mark Robson, 1949).

intolerance. Mark Robson's *Home of the Brave* (1949; produced by Stanley Kramer), sympathetically portraying the psychiatric odyssey of a black veteran, initiated what has come to be known as the "Negro cycle" of that year, which included Clarence Brown's restrained and dignified version of William Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust*, shot on location in Oxford, Mississippi, as well as Alfred Werker's *Lost Boundaries* (produced by the documentarist Louis De Rochemont), which was based on the true story of an ostensibly "white" man's shattering discovery of his black parentage. The latter was also shot on location (in Maine and New Hampshire) with a largely nonprofessional cast. This same technique was practiced in the "problem" cycle's most elaborate exposé of political corruption, Robert Rossen's adaptation of Robert Penn Warren's novel *All the King's Men* (1949), a portrait of an authentic American demagogue, based on the career of Louisiana governor Huey Long.

Moreover, although they can scarcely be described as problem pictures, there were several other films of the postwar era that employed various forms of social corruption as metaphors for more serious disorders in the cosmos and in the human soul. Robert Rossen's *Body and Soul* (1947; written by Abraham Polonsky [1910–1999]) and Robert Wise's *The Set-Up* (1949), for example, both used corruption in the prize-fighting business and the brutality of the "sport" itself to suggest something about the nature of human evil, while Polonsky's own poetically directed *Force of Evil* (1948) used the numbers racket in New York City to create a paradigm of capitalism collapsing internally from its own rottenness.

Closely related to the problem pictures was a series of semi-documentary crime melodramas that frequently had social overtones. These films were usually based on true criminal cases and shot on location with as many of the original participants in the cast as it was feasible to assemble. The first was Henry Hathaway's *The House on 92nd Street* (1945), a dramatic re-enactment of an authentic case of domestic espionage, based entirely on FBI files and produced for 20th Century–Fox by Louis De Rochemont (1899–1978), creator of *The March of Time* newsreels (1935–1951).

De Rochemont followed this film with three other semi-documentary productions, which gave Fox clear leadership in the field: Hathaway's *13 Rue Madeleine* (1946), a re-creation of **OSS** (**Office of Strategic Services;** the model for the CIA) activity in Montreal during the war; Elia Kazan's critically acclaimed *Boomerang!* (1947), based on the true story of a state's attorney who faced the wrath of an entire Connecticut town to clear an accused man of murder; and Hathaway's *Kiss of Death* (1947), an unglamorized account of criminals and cops in New York City's underworld.

The outstanding commercial success of these films produced many others using the same formula of a fictionalized story based on fact and shot on location with nonprofessional actors; Jules Dassin's *The Naked City* (1948), William Keighley's *The Street with No Name* (1948), and Anthony Mann's *T-Men* (1948) are among the best of these. In *The Naked City*, conceived and produced by Mark Hellinger, Dassin used a conventional crime melodrama as the vehicle for an uncompromisingly naturalistic portrait of the brutal and impersonal modern city; much of this film was shot by cinematographer William Daniels (1895–1970) in



Charles Wagenheim in *The House on 92nd Street* (Henry Hathaway, 1945).



Marlon Brando in *On the Waterfront* (Elia Kazan, 1954).

cinéma vérité fashion with hidden cameras. After 1948, the semi-documentary melodrama largely degenerated into stereotype, and most critics consider that the final collaboration of Hathaway and De Rochemont, *Call Northside 777* (1948), based on the true case of a Chicago reporter (played by James Stewart) who attempted to clear a Polish American of a murder charge, was the last important film of its type. Nevertheless, the influence of these motion pictures continued well into the 1950s, as the documentary surfaces of fiction films such as John Huston's *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950), Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* (1954), and Alfred Hitchcock's *The Wrong Man* (1957) attest.

Film Noir

For a while, both the problem pictures and the semi-documentary crime thrillers made it seem that Italian neorealism had found a home in an uneasy, if affluent, America. Yet another variety of postwar American film, one that depended on the controlled environment of the studio as well as on real locations for its depiction of the seamy underside of American life, soon appeared. This was film noir (literally, "black film"), discovered and named by French critics in 1946 when, seeing American motion pictures for the first time since 1940, they perceived a strange new mood of cynicism, darkness, and despair in certain crime films and melodramas. They derived the term from the *Série noire* detective novels then popular in France, many of which were translations of works by members of the "hard-boiled" school of American crime writers—Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and James M. Cain (later joined by Horace McCoy, Mickey Spillane, and Jim Thompson)—whose books were also frequently adapted in films noir. Like the novels, these films were characterized by a downbeat atmosphere and graphic violence, and they carried postwar American pessimism to the point of nihilism by assuming the absolute and irredeemable corruption of society and of everyone in it. Billy Wilder's corrosive *Double Indemnity* (1944), which startled Hollywood in the year of its release and was almost banned by the Hays Office, may be regarded as the prototype for film noir, although some critics trace the origins back to such tough but considerably less cynical films as *Stranger on the Third Floor* (Boris Ingster, 1940), *High Sierra* (Raoul Walsh, 1941), *The Maltese Falcon*





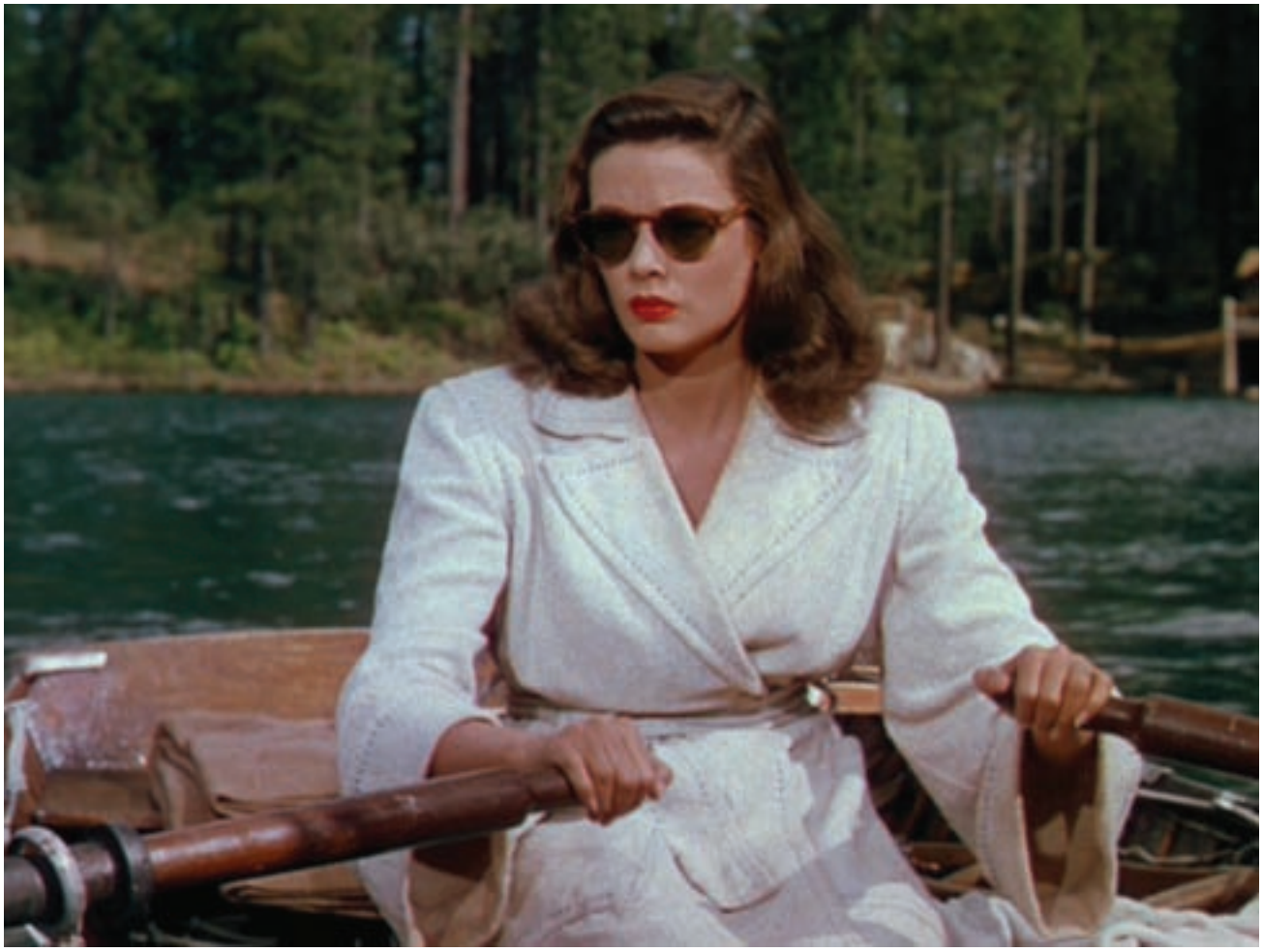
Barbara Stanwyck and Fred MacMurray in *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, 1944): the double cross and murder in the night.

(John Huston, 1941; adapted from Hammett), and *This Gun for Hire* (Frank Tuttle, 1942). Adapted by Wilder and Raymond Chandler from a James M. Cain novel, *Double Indemnity* is the sordid story of a Los Angeles insurance agent (Fred MacMurray) seduced by a client's wife (Barbara Stanwyck) into murdering her husband for his death benefits; it has been called "a film without a single trace of pity or love."

Indeed, these are qualities notably absent from all films noir, as perhaps they seemed absent from the postwar America that produced them. Like *Double Indemnity*, these films thrived on the unvarnished depiction of greed, lust, and cruelty because their basic theme was the depth of human depravity and the utterly unheroic nature of human beings—lessons that were hardly taught but certainly reemphasized by the unique horrors of World War II. Most of the dark films of the late 1940s take the form of crime melodramas, because (as Dostoevsky and Dickens knew) the mechanisms of crime and criminal detection provide a perfect metaphor for corruption that cuts across conventional moral categories. These films are often set in Southern California—the topographical paradigm for a society in which the gap between expectation and reality is resolved through mass delusion. The protagonists are frequently unsympathetic antiheroes who pursue their base designs or simply drift aimlessly through sinister night worlds of the urban American jungle, but they are just as often decent people caught in traps laid for them by a corrupt social order. In this latter sense, film noir was very much a "cinema of moral anxiety" of the sort practiced at various times in postwar Eastern Europe, most recently in Poland at the height of the Solidarity movement—in other words, a cinema about the conditions of life forced on honest people in a mendacious, self-deluding society.

The moral instability of this world was translated into a visual style by the great noir cinematographers John Alton, Nicholas Musuraca, John F. Seitz, Lee Garmes, Tony Gaudio, Sol Polito, Ernest Haller, Lucien Ballard, and James Wong Howe. These technicians rendered moral ambiguity palpably real through what has been called antitraditional cinematography. The style included the pervasive use of wide-angle lenses, permitting greater depth of field but causing expressive distortion in close-ups; angular, unnatural compositions; and low-key lighting and night-for-night shooting (that is, actually shooting night scenes at night, rather than in bright daylight with dark filters), both of which create harsh contrasts between the light and dark areas of the frame, with dark predominating to parallel the moral chaos of the world.

If all of this seems reminiscent of the artificial studio technique of German Expressionism, it should, because—like the Universal horror cycle of the 1930s—film noir was created to a large extent by German and Eastern European expatriates, many of whom had received their basic training at UFA in the 1920s and the early 1930s. The noir directors Fritz Lang, Robert Siodmak, Billy Wilder, Otto Preminger, John Brahm, Anatole Litvak, Max Ophüls, William Dieterle, Douglas Sirk, Edgar G. Ulmer, and Curtis Bernhardt; the director-cinematographer Rudolph Maté; the cinematographers



Gene Tierney in *Leave Her to Heaven* (John M. Stahl, 1945): Technicolor noir.

Karl Freund and John Alton; and the composers Franz Waxman and Max Steiner had all been associated with or influenced by the UFA studio style.

Nevertheless, given its subject matter, film noir could scarcely escape the general realistic tendency of postwar cinema, and noir directors frequently shot exteriors on location. Such wartime innovations as smaller camera dollies and portable power packs, higher-speed lenses, and more sensitive, fine-grain film stocks simplified the logistics of location shooting and helped create for film noir a nearly homogeneous visual style. For this reason, it has become fashionable to speak of film noir as a type (some believe it is a genre) of "romantic" or "expressive" realism, but its heritage includes such a wide range of cultural forces—German Expressionism and horror, American gangster films of the 1930s, Sternbergian exoticism and decadence, the poetic realism of Carné and Duvivier, the hard-boiled tradition of American fiction, the 1940s popularization of Freud, postwar American disillusionment (especially a sense of sexual betrayal among returning GIs) and the wave of cinematic realism it engendered, Cold War paranoia, and of course, *Citizen Kane*—that it seems better to characterize it as a cycle, rather than to delimit its boundaries too rigidly.

Furthermore, as several critics have suggested, film noir describes a period, as well as a style or a genre, for darkness and cynicism invaded *all* genres in late-1940s cinema, not simply that of the crime thriller and the melodrama. Raymond Durgnat points out that films as disparate as John M. Stahl's bizarre romance *Leave Her to Heaven* (1945), King Vidor's epic Western *Duel in the Sun* (1946), and Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) have distinctly noir elements, and there was a whole series of late-1940s melodramas that may be said to range from off-black to gray (*films gris*), the models for which were Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940) and George Cukor's *Gaslight* (1944), not to mention the atmospheric low-budget horror cycle of RKO producer Val Lewton (1904–1951).

In the end, perhaps the most categorical thing we can say about film noir is that both thematically and stylistically, it represents a unique and highly creative countertradition in American cinema, derived from eclectic sources and motivated by the pervasive existential cynicism of the postwar era. With several significant exceptions—for example, Mervyn LeRoy's *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932) and Fritz Lang's *You Only Live Once* (1937)—most American films of the prewar Depression era—and most American films, for that matter—had been optimistic, affirmative, and generally supportive of the status quo. We have seen, however, that postwar America produced, with the problem picture and the semi-documentary melodrama, a cinema of disillusionment and searching that rejected the epic heroics and callow idealism of World War II films—but one that always suggested that the inequities of American society could be resolved through good faith and work.

Yet film noir showed all human values to be seriously embattled, if not ultimately corrupt, and sneered at the prospects for change (perhaps, as some suggest, because the atomic future was too frightening to contemplate). Never before had American cinema handed down such extreme indictments of American society or any other, and it would not do so again until the late 1960s, when the indictments would be mitigated by libertarian idealism. However briefly, then, film noir held up a dark mirror to postwar America and reflected its moral anarchy. (The revival of the genre in the Watergate era and during the morally bankrupt presidency of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s suggests a continuing relationship among film noir, political malaise, and social disintegration.) Not surprisingly, a number of important and powerful Americans did not like what they saw.

The Witch Hunt and the Blacklist

Our Cold War with the Soviet Union began officially in July 1947, when Stalin refused to accept the Marshall Plan for the Soviet Union or any of its satellites, but of course, Soviet-American tensions, although briefly relaxed during the alliance to defeat Hitler, had been mounting ever since the Bolshevik Revolution. Among other things, this meant that in the public mind, the menace of Nazi agents and fifth columnists was replaced by the menace of Communist spies and "fellow travelers," doubly sinister because they looked just like everyone else and didn't speak with an accent. Furthermore, what David Caute has called "the myth of the Vital Secret"—the inflated notion that members of the American Communist Party were feverishly conducting atomic espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union—was widespread during this era and would result in the conviction of Alger Hiss (1948), the rise and fall of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy (1950–1954), and the executions of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg (1953). Politically, the country was in the throes of an anti–New Deal backlash that had been building since the tumultuous 1930s, and Hollywood, as a signal beneficiary of FDR's economic and social policies, became the target for a squalid inquisition that brought shame and/or ruin to hundreds of key industry personnel.

In the spring of 1947, the House Committee on Un-American Activities (commonly, and pejoratively, known as HUAC), which had been inactive since the hot war ended, decided to undertake a full-scale investigation of what its chairman, J. Parnell Thomas (R–N.J.), called "communism in motion pictures." As John Howard Lawson, one of the victims of this investigation, later wrote, the charge that American films contained "communist propaganda" in the late 1940s or at any other time was wholly laughable, because the American film industry was one of the most conservative elements in the country. There were, however, recent films of predominantly liberal sentiment, such as the problem pictures and the semi-documentary melodramas, and there were the apolitical film noirs, which did not take a very sanguine view of life under any system of government.

There were also all of those pro-Russian films made at the OWI's behest during the war, when the Soviet Union had been America's ally (a HUAC subcommittee report would later claim that "some of the most flagrant Communist propaganda films were produced as a result of White House pressure" during the war and that Roosevelt's National Labor Relations Board had infiltrated Communists into the industry). Yet most damaging of all, because there was at least factual substance to the charge, a number of famous Hollywood directors, screenwriters, and actors had joined the Communist Party or contributed funds to its activities during the Depression, when it had seemed to offer a viable alternative to starving under capitalism. Some had merely supported causes, such as relief for refugees from Franco's Spain, that were also supported by Communists. It was among these people, most of whom had dropped their Communist Party affiliation years earlier, that HUAC was able to do the most damage.

In September 1947, the tragicomedy began as the committee subpoenaed forty-one witnesses, nineteen



Gary Cooper testifies at a HUAC hearing.

of whom declared their intention to be "unfriendly"—that is, to refuse to answer questions about their political beliefs. When the hearings began on October 20, the so-called friendly witnesses (among them the producers Jack L. Warner and Louis B. Mayer; the writers Ayn Rand and Morrie Ryskind; the actors Adolphe Menjou, Robert Taylor, Robert Montgomery, George Murphy, Ronald Reagan, and Gary Cooper; the directors Leo McCarey and Sam Wood; and producer-director Walt Disney) were called first. They proved their patriotism by naming people whom they identified as leftists and generally telling the congressmen what they wanted to hear. ("Hollywood," claimed the right-winger Menjou, "is one of the main centers of Communist activity in America"; Disney testified that the Screen Cartoonists Guild was Communist-dominated and had tried to take over his studio.)

Of the nineteen unfriendly witnesses, eleven were summoned to the witness stand the following week for questioning about their alleged Communist Party membership: the German émigré playwright Bertolt Brecht; the screenwriters Alvah Bessie, Lester Cole, Ring Lardner Jr., John Howard Lawson, Albert Maltz, Samuel Ornitz, Adrian Scott, and Dalton Trumbo; and the directors Herbert Biberman and Edward Dmytryk. Hollywood liberals, including John Huston, William Wyler, Gene Kelly, Danny Kaye, Humphrey Bogart, and Lauren Bacall, responded by forming the Committee for the First Amendment (CFA) to fight for the constitutional rights of the "accused witnesses"—a contradiction in the terms of jurisprudence, if there ever was one—but opposition faltered when the now-famous Hollywood Ten listed above (less Brecht, who temporized before the committee, then fled the country several days later) defied HUAC by refusing to testify and were subsequently given prison sentences of six months to a year for contempt of Congress. The committee's action was scandalous, but its meaning was crystal clear: HUAC wished to purge Hollywood and, if possible, the entire country of any and all liberal tendencies by creating and then exploiting anticommunist hysteria. The threat of state censorship loomed, and panic broke out in the nation's most image-conscious industry, which was already plagued by antitrust actions, unemployment, and rapidly declining profits.

On November 24, 1947, the same day that the House of Representatives by a nearly unanimous vote approved HUAC's contempt citations for the Ten, Hollywood closed ranks against some of the most

talented artists it had ever known. The fifty members of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA; MPPDA before 1945) and the Association of Motion Picture Producers (the business and public-relations component of the MPAA, representing the industry's most powerful executives, including Eric Johnston, Nicholas M. Schenck, Harry Cohn, Joseph M. Schenck, Walter Wanger, Samuel Goldwyn, Henry Ginsberg, Albert Warner, Louis B. Mayer, Dore Schary, Spyros Skouras, and William Goetz) produced the Waldorf Statement, censuring the behavior of the Ten, firing them, and refusing to re-employ any of them "until such time as he is acquitted or has purged himself of contempt and declares under oath that he is not a Communist."

The statement continued by spelling out future industry policy: "We will not knowingly employ a Communist or member of any party or group which advocates the overthrow of the government of the United States by force or by illegal or unconstitutional methods." This was the beginning of the infamous practice of blacklisting, which brought to an end one of the most creative periods in the history of American film and made Hollywood a wasteland of vapidity, complacency, and cowardice for well over a decade. From 1948 to 1951, there was a lull of sorts, as the production community drew a cautionary lesson from the fate of the Ten and allowed the Committee for the First Amendment to disintegrate, with Bogart and Bacall, for example, publicly calling their participation a "mistake."

The once-liberal Screen Actors Guild (SAG), under the new leadership of Ronald Reagan, required that its members take a loyalty oath and in the following year openly condoned the blacklist. Yet in March 1951, HUAC, now chaired by John S. Wood (D–Ga.), began a new onslaught by subpoenaing forty-five unfriendly witnesses, who were called on very specifically to name names and inform on former colleagues. By the end of the second round of hearings—which were televised, adding to their frisson—110 men and women had testified, 58 of them confessing past party membership and collectively providing the committee with the names of 212 alleged fellow travelers. Those who refused to inform were put under tremendous pressure to "come clean"—a process of self-abasement that involved denouncing one's friends (especially if they had already been denounced by previous witnesses), confessing one's own guilt by association, and groveling not only before HUAC, but before a host of self-appointed Grand Inquisitors and "clearance" agencies in the private sector, such as the American Legion and American Business Consultants, editors of the scurrilous public blacklists *Counterattack* and *Red Channels*.

Some refused to cringe, and at the end of the process in 1951 (which was resumed when Senator Pat McCarran's Internal Security Subcommittee reopened the hearings in 1952, subpoenaing Judy Holliday, Burl Ives, and others), 324 people had been fired by the studios and were no longer permitted to work in the American film industry. Among them were some of the most talented directors, writers, and actors of the postwar cinema. Some of the writers were able to make a living by selling their scripts on the black market under the names of real people, or "fronts." The 1956 Academy Award for the Best Original Screenplay, for example, went to a mysterious "Mr. Robert Rich" for Irving Rapper's *The Brave One*.

The Oscar could not be picked up at the time because Rich was actually Dalton Trumbo; four years later, tensions had relaxed to the point that Trumbo could receive screen credit in his own name—for Otto Preminger's *Exodus* (1960) and Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus* (1960). Yet the highly visible actors and directors were doomed to unemployment (Muni) or exile (Losey and Dassin went to Europe). Some lost their lives: Philip Loeb, one of the stars of the popular television series *The Goldbergs*, committed suicide; and the screen actors John Garfield, Canada Lee, J. Edward Bromberg, and Mady Christians died as a result of the stress they were subjected to. Hundreds of other film people were maligned by HUAC but managed to survive under the cloud of either marginal blacklisting (e.g., Lewis Milestone, Fredric March, José Ferrer, and Edward G. Robinson) or their own collaboration with the investigating body (e.g., Elia Kazan, Richard Collins, Harold Hecht, Clifford Odets, Isobel Lennart, Bernard Schoenfeld, Lee J. Cobb, Lucille Ball, Sterling Hayden, Lloyd Bridges, Frank Tuttle, Budd Schulberg, and, ultimately, Edward Dmytryk and Robert Rossen).

Several commentators have suggested that for members of the latter group, the moral catastrophe of informing proved as destructive as the practical effects of being blacklisted, but materially, at least, quite the reverse was true. While the victims of the blacklist lost their jobs, their families, and even their lives, most of the informers prospered. Ball, Cobb, Schulberg, and Kazan, for example, were all rewarded with stunning career success in the 1950s, Kazan winning an Academy Award for directing a paean to informing in *On the Waterfront* (1954)—which, not coincidentally, was written by Schulberg, starred



Michel Ray in *The Brave One* (Irving Rapper, 1956). This film won an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay for "Mr. Robert B. Rich," a front for the blacklisted Dalton Trumbo, who could, of course, not receive one.

Cobb, and was also named Best Film of the Year by the Academy, the New York Film Critics Circle, and the National Board of Review. At the same time, Lester Cole was working in a warehouse, Sidney Buchman operated a parking garage, and Alvah Bessie was a stagehand at a nightclub; others struggled to support their families as maître d's, appliance repairmen, and outside salesmen.

The practice of blacklisting in the American film industry continued well into the 1950s, and its impact was felt during the entire 1960s. Abraham Polonsky, for example, was not able to direct again in Hollywood until 1969, when his *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here* appeared—twenty-one years after *Force of Evil*. Yet as damaging to American cinema as the loss of individual talent was the pervasive mood of fear, distrust, and self-loathing that settled over Hollywood in the wake of the hearings. Everyone was scared of the government and of everyone else, and the industry tacitly imposed a form of self-censorship more repressive and sterile than anything HUAC could have devised.

As early as 1948, William Wyler speculated that a modestly progressive film such as his own *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946) could not be made in America again, adding, "In a few months we won't be able to have a heavy who is an American." Wyler was right. No one in Hollywood was willing to take the slightest chance on anybody or anything; the industry had had its fill of trouble and wanted no more of it. Safety, caution, and respectability were the watchwords of the studio chiefs, and controversial or even serious subject matter was avoided at all costs. Thus vitiated, frightened, and drained of creative vitality, Hollywood experienced in miniature what the whole of American society was to experience during the McCarthy-era witch hunts—intellectual stagnation and moral paralysis.

The Arrival of Television

Finally, as if the devastating impact of the hearings was not enough to sink Hollywood's already foundering ship, a new entertainment medium suddenly emerged that threatened to do the job all by itself. This, of course, was **television**—a system for transmitting moving images based on the process of electronic image analysis and synthesis patented by the independent inventor Philo T. Farnsworth in 1930. RCA, which had been moving toward the development of just such a system for several years through the work of the Russian scientist Vladimir K. Zworykin, attempted first to buy and then to pre-empt Farnsworth's patents through litigation. In 1939, however, the courts gave legal priority to Farnsworth, and in September, RCA licensed his patents for a period of ten years for $1 million—the first and only time in its history that the corporation was forced to pay royalties, rather than collect them.

Formally introduced to the public at the 1939 New York World's Fair, television was a smashing success, and RCA began marketing receivers in the same year for regularly scheduled daily broadcasts (about fifteen hours per week) via its NBC subsidiary. CBS began telecasting in the following year, and in July 1941, the FCC set format standards for black-and-white transmission and authorized the full operation of commercial television. Wartime restrictions soon put a halt to the manufacture of television transmission equipment and receivers, and the networks were forced to curtail their telecasts sharply. When the war ended, however, they resumed regular daily telecasting, and the production of transmitters and receivers burgeoned.

By 1949, there were 1 million TV sets in use in the United States, and the television broadcasting industry had begun in earnest. Only two years later, there were ten times as many sets in use, and by 1959, the number had risen to 50 million. In 1946, when two-thirds of the total population of the country went to the movies



A fanciful picture of a family watching television—"movies in the home" (c. 1950).

weekly, attendance had been guaranteed by the nearly complete lack of alternate sources of audiovisual entertainment. Now that lack was met with a vengeance.

At first, Hollywood attempted to enter the television business by applying for station licenses in major markets and by innovating large-screen television in its theater circuits (HBO-like subscription programming for in-house viewing was also tested). The studios were outmaneuvered politically, however, by the dominant radio networks, and NBC, CBS, and ABC moved directly into television broadcasting, with the blessing of an FCC that looked askance at the movie monopolists' recent conviction in the Paramount case; in this context, moreover, theater/subscription television simply could not compete with the "free" programming provided by the networks.

When it became clear that film and television were in direct competition for the same audience, the members of the MPAA adopted a bunker mentality and, until 1956, refused to sell or lease their product for broadcast—a strategy that in the long run may have hurt the industry financially more than either direct competition from television itself or the Paramount decrees. Furthermore, many studios contractually restrained their stars from appearing on television, which simply stimulated the new medium to develop star personalities on its own, and by 1949, the American film industry was seriously threatened by television. In that year, attendance dropped to 70 million, from 90 million in 1948, and it continued to decline in direct proportion to the number of television sets in use. In the first quarter of 1949, only twenty-two features, or half the normal number, were in production in Hollywood, and by the end of the year the major studios were ordering large layoffs and salary reductions, star contracts were being permitted to lapse, and all over the country, the great movie palaces had begun to close their doors.

Yet those who predicted the demise of Hollywood overlooked the American film industry's quintessential feature: its nearly protean capacity for adaptation. Though Hollywood was never to recover its immediate postwar status or to recapture its once vast audiences from television, in the decade of the 1950s it adapted, counterattacked, and—as always (to date, at least)—survived.



Bing Crosby, Grace Kelly, and Louis Calhern in *High Society* (Charles Walters, 1956): VistaVision (originally 1.85:1).



12

Hollywood, 1952–1965

Much that characterized Hollywood between 1952 and 1965 can be understood as a response to anticommunist hysteria and the blacklist on the one hand, and to the advent of television and economic divestiture on the other. In the name of combating communism, films directly critical of American institutions, such as the "problem pictures" and the semi-documentary melodramas so popular in the immediate postwar years, could no longer be made. Instead, Westerns, musical comedies, lengthy costume epics, and other traditional genre fare—sanitized and shorn of explicit political and social referents—became the order of the day. Such films dominated the domestic market of the era, both because their subject matter was uncontroversial and because their spectacular nature was suited to the new screen formats, which the studios had embraced to do battle with television and, simultaneously, to make their product more attractive to their former subsidiaries, the newly independent first-run exhibitors.

The Conversion to Color

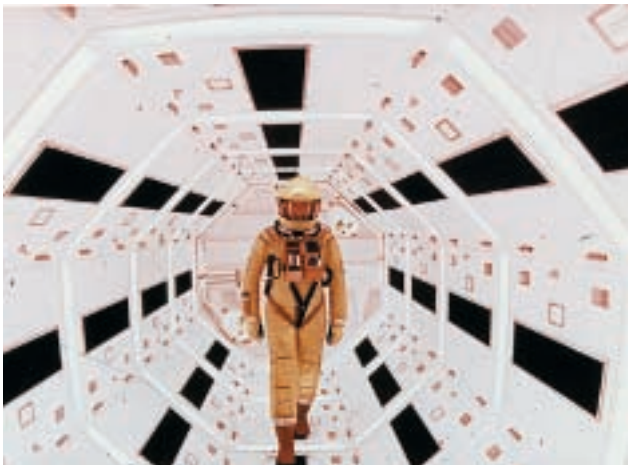
Television threatened Hollywood with a new technology, and Hollywood fought back in kind by isolating and exploiting the technological advantages that film possessed over television. The cinema had two such advantages in the early 1950s, both of them associated with spectacle—the vast size of its images and the



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[1] *Ivan the Terrible, Part II* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1946) was shot on Agfacolor stock, liberated from German studios in Prague, by Eduard Tisse. Agfacolor became the model for Eastmancolor and other integral tripack systems: Academy frame (originally 1.33:1). [2] *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (Stanley Donen, 1954) was shot in Anscocolor and CinemaScope (originally 2.55:1) by cinematographer, George J. Folsey. [3] *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968) was shot in Metrocolor—a variant of Eastmancolor, named after the releasing studio MGM—and Super Panavision 70 (originally 2.20:1) by Geoffrey Unsworth (with additional photography by John Alcott); it won the British Academy Award for Best Cinematography. [4] *Kismet* (Vincente Minnelli, 1955) was shot in Eastmancolor and CinemaScope (originally 2.55:1) by Joseph Ruttenberg.

capacity to produce them in color. (Soon, the capacity for stereophonic sound would be added to the list.) It was the competition with television that prompted Hollywood's rapid conversion from black-and-white to color production between 1952 and 1955. In 1947, only 12 percent of American feature films were made in color; by 1954, the figure had risen to more than 50 percent.

The changeover was made possible by the breakup of Technicolor's de facto monopoly over color technology and aesthetics. The Justice Department had filed an antitrust suit against Technicolor and its supplier, Eastman Kodak, in 1947 for monopolization of color cinematography. Even though yearly Technicolor production did not increase dramatically—from fewer than twenty films in the early 1940s to more than fifty in 1948—and rival processes such as Cinecolor and Trucolor were in general use, the company was judged to exercise a monopoly by virtue of its authoritarian control of the three-color process. In 1950, a federal consent decree ordered the corporation to set aside a certain number of its three-strip

cameras for use by independent producers and minor studios on a first-come, first-served basis. Yet it was another event of that year, commercial introduction of a viable single-strip color process in Eastmancolor, that finally brought Technicolor's effective monopoly to an end.

First used experimentally in 1949, Eastmancolor was based on the German Agfacolor process invented for 16mm use by the Agfa Corporation in 1936. Similar to Technicolor Monopack, Agfacolor used a multilayered film stock, but the layers were composed of photographic emulsions sensitive to red, green, and blue bonded together in a single roll. This "integral tripack" negative formed three color images simultaneously and, after development through a process known as dye-coupling, was printed onto a multilayered positive film for release. First used commercially in 1940, the process briefly became a jewel in the crown of Nazi cinema when it was used in such spectacular productions as *Die goldene Stadt* (*The Golden City*; Veit Harlan, 1942), *Immensee* (*Immense*; Veit Harlan, 1943), *Münchhausen* (Josef von Báky, 1943), and *Kolberg* (Veit Harlan, 1945; re-released 1966). Eisenstein used Agfacolor stock captured from the studios of liberated Prague to film the color sequences of *Ivan the Terrible, Part II* (1946), and it became the technical basis for the Sovcolor system officially adopted by the Soviet industry during the 1950s (Sergei Yutkevich's *Othello* [1956] was the first major Sovcolor feature).

After the war and the release of Agfa's patents, Agfacolor principles were also used in a number of Western systems, most notably Anscocolor, which had wide currency in Hollywood from 1953 to 1955 and appeared in such popular productions as *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (Stanley Donen, 1954) and *Brigadoon* (Vincente Minnelli, 1954).

But it was Kodak's subtle refinement of integral tripack that permitted Eastmancolor to replace Technicolor as the dominant color system of the West. Unlike Agfacolor, Sovcolor, or Anscocolor, Eastmancolor incorporated "automatic color masking," a principle already used successfully in Kodacolor still photography to enhance the clarity and brilliance of the final print. Eastmancolor was thus able to offer the industry a low-cost negative tripack stock capable of excellent color contrast, which could be shot through a conventional single-lens camera and processed in a conventional laboratory, just like black and white.

When it was discovered simultaneously that imbibition printing did not yield enough resolution for the new anamorphic widescreen processes, Technicolor's fate was sealed. In 1952, Kodak received an Academy Award for Eastmancolor (Scientific or Technical Award, Class I), and within two years, the Technicolor three-strip camera and the company's special processing service were rendered obsolete. (Technicolor cameras were used for the last time in the production of *Foxfire* [Joseph Pevney, 1955], but Technicolor continued its imbibition printing activities—subsequently improved for use with widescreen—until 1975, using Eastmancolor negatives to produce its matrices.)

Though the system came to be known by the trade names of the studios who paid to use it (Warnercolor, Metrocolor, Pathécolor) or the labs that did the processing (Movielab, Technicolor, Deluxe), it was Kodak Eastmancolor that inaugurated and sustained the full-color age with integral tripack and dye-coupler printing, and by 1975 even the Technicolor Corporation had converted to a printing process similar to Eastman's. After the 1950s, color became an infinitely more subtle medium than black and white. By 1975, 96 percent of all American feature films were being made in color (see Figure 12.1).

Widescreen and 3-D

Multiple-Camera/Projector Widescreen: Cinerama

In a simultaneous attempt to exploit the *size* of the screen image, Hollywood began to experiment with new optical systems that lent greater width and depth to the image. The earliest of the new formats was a multiple-camera/projector widescreen process called **Cinerama**, introduced in September 1952, that was similar to the Polyvision process Abel Gance had used in *Napoléon* (1927) some twenty-five years earlier and was originally devised as a battle simulator for gunnery training during World War II by the inventor Fred Waller (1886–1954).

In Cinerama, three synchronized 35mm cameras linked together in an arc would simultaneously record a wide-field image, which three similarly linked projectors would later cast on a vast wraparound screen (actually, a three-screen triptych). The projected image was thus three times as wide as the standard 35mm image; it was also nearly twice as tall because of two extra sprocket holes (six instead of four) per frame on the film strip. The seams between the three images were concealed by a slight overlapping of the camera lenses

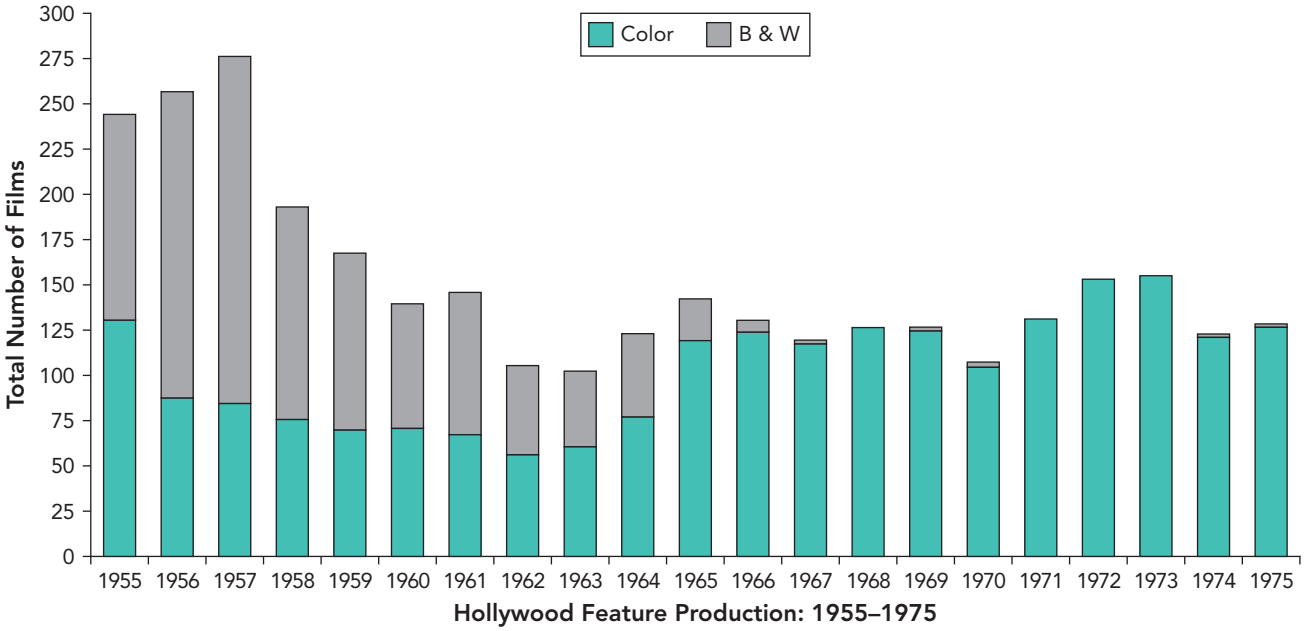


Figure 12.1: The ratio of color to black-and-white cinematography in American feature films production after the introduction of Eastmancolor—the cost-effective single-strip process that replaced three-strip Technicolor as the industry standard. (The dip in color production between 1956 and 1965 is because television sales became a major source of revenue for Hollywood during that time, and television was then broadcast almost exclusively in black and white. Producers could cut their costs by filming in black and white, making their films more attractive to the television market, and losing nothing in the translation from one medium to the other.)

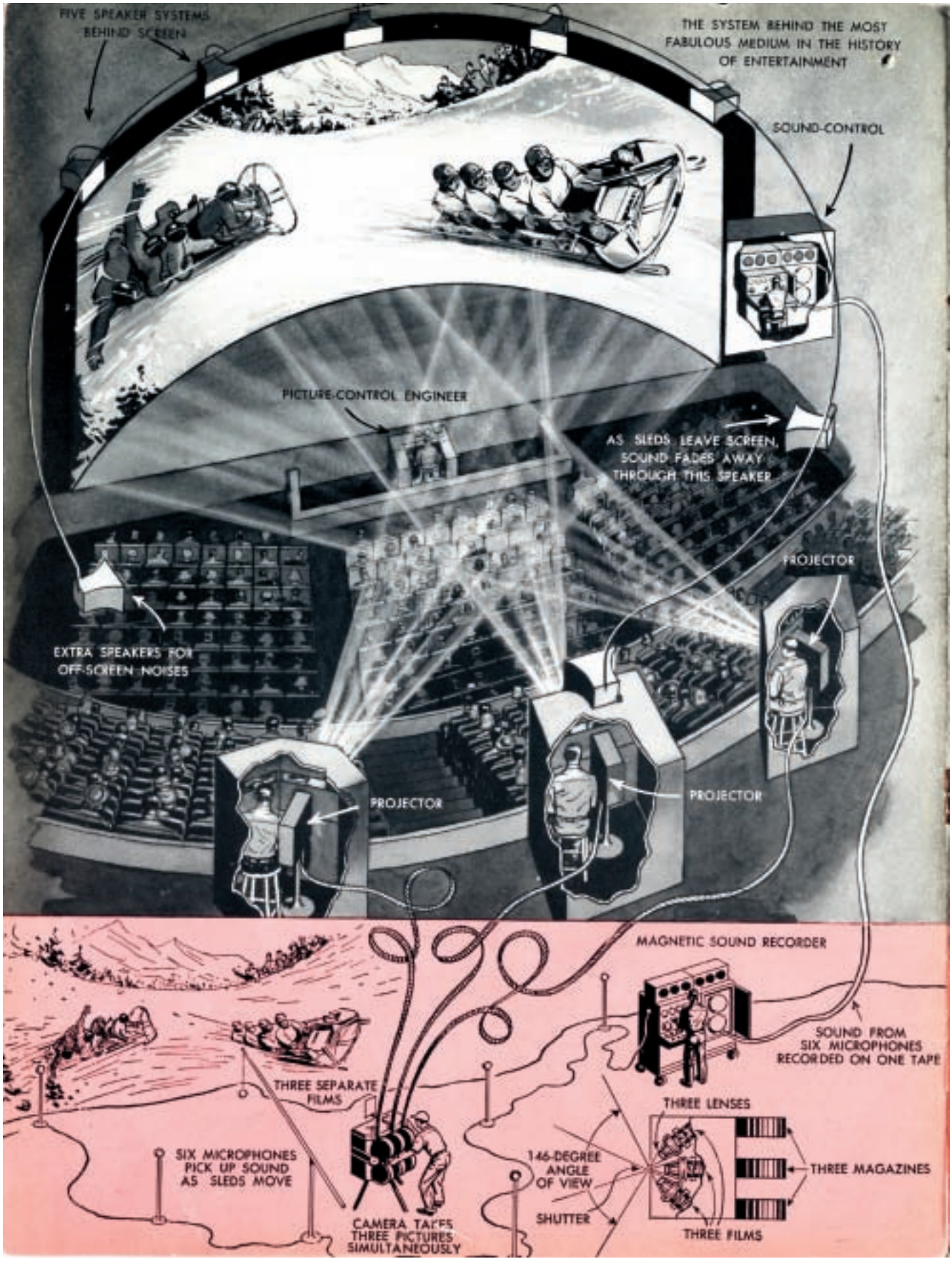
and by floating metal combs in the projectors, a technique that never proved wholly satisfactory.

Nevertheless, the Cinerama image was six times the standard size, and its curvilinear shape added the phenomenon of peripheral vision to the screen. Cinerama also surrounded its audience with seven-track stereophonic sound, recorded magnetically rather than optically, on a separate strip of 35mm film, which permitted a directional use of sound appropriate to its sprawling image. All of these factors combined to create an illusion of depth and spectator involvement that was thrilling to audiences accustomed to the flat, rectilinear screen of decades past, and for a time Cinerama became immensely popular.

Yet the process was cumbersome and very expensive for both filmmaker and exhibitor, and therefore for the paying public. Only theaters in large cities could afford to install the complicated projection equipment and the huge three-panel screens (the installation cost $75,000), so it was as a costly urban novelty that Cinerama enjoyed its initial success. Accordingly, it offered its audiences circuses, rather than narrative. Films such as *This Is Cinerama* (1952) and *Windjammer* (1958) featured a succession of wild rides, extravagant spectacles, and exotic travelogues, but no stories. The first story films made in Cinerama, *How the West Was Won* (1962) and *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm* (1962), proved that the multiple-camera process was simply too clumsy and costly for the production of conventional narratives. *How the West Was Won*, for example, required the services of three directors (John Ford, Henry Hathaway, and George Marshall) and four cinematographers and cost the then staggering sum of $14 million to shoot.

In 1963, driven by economic necessity, Cinerama appropriated a single-lens wide-film widescreen system (Ultra Panavision 70) for its next film, *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* (1963), and finally adopted its own wide-film system, Super Cinerama, which, combined with a special elliptical projection lens, allowed it to keep and fill its deeply curved screen. Given its great expense and peculiar technology, multiple-camera Cinerama never really had a chance of becoming a widely used process. At the height of its popularity, only a hundred cities all over the world were equipped to show Cinerama films. Yet the astounding success

(right) A schematic diagram of the multiple-camera Cinerama photography and the projection process.


FIVE SPEAKER SYSTEMS BEHIND SCREEN
THE SYSTEM BEHIND THE MOST FABULOUS MEDIUM IN THE HISTORY OF ENTERTAINMENT
SOUND-CONTROL
PICTURE-CONTROL ENGINEER
AS SLEDS LEAVE SCREEN, SOUND FADES AWAY THROUGH THIS SPEAKER
PROJECTOR
EXTRA SPEAKERS FOR OFF-SCREEN NOISES
PROJECTOR
PROJECTOR
MAGNETIC SOUND RECORDER
SOUND FROM SIX MICROPHONES RECORDED ON ONE TAPE
THREE SEPARATE FILMS
THREE LENSES
SIX MICROPHONES PICK UP SOUND AS SLEDS MOVE
146-DEGREE ANGLE OF VIEW
THREE MAGAZINES
SHUTTER
CAMERA TAKES THREE PICTURES SIMULTANEOUSLY
THREE FILMS



Henry Fonda in *How the West Was Won* (John Ford, Henry Hathaway, and George Marshall, 1962): multiple-camera Cinerama (originally 2.89:1).

of Cinerama in the early 1950s was the catalyst that started the widescreen revolution and brought audiences back into the theaters again in large numbers for the first time since 1946. For this reason alone, Cinerama holds a special place in the history of film.

Depth: Stereoscopic 3-D

Hollywood's next experiment with new optical formats was considerably less successful, although, like Cinerama, it was initially quite popular. Stereoscopic 3-D had precedents in the cinema's earliest days, when such pioneers as William Friese-Greene and the Lumières experimented with anaglyphic systems. In these, two strips of film, one tinted red and the other blue-green, were projected simultaneously for an audience wearing glasses with red and blue-green filtered lenses. The effect was stereoscopic synthesis in monochrome, and experiments with anaglyphic 3-D continued into the 1920s, when Harry K. Fairall produced the first feature film, *The Power of Love* (1922), in the process.

In the late 1930s, MGM released a series of anaglyphic shorts produced by Pete Smith under the title of Audioscopiks, but in the meantime Edwin Land

had developed polarized filters that permitted the production of full-color 3-D images. Polarized features using lenses developed concurrently by Zeiss Ikon AG, were produced in Italy in 1936 and Germany in 1937, and the Chrysler Corporation presented a polarized 3-D short in Technicolor at the New York World's Fair in 1939, but the war postponed further exploitation of the process.

In November 1952, however, the independent producer Arch Oboler (1909–1987) introduced a polarized 3-D process called Natural Vision, which had been invented by a team of opticians and camera engineers, in the Anscocolor feature *Bwana Devil*. In Natural Vision, two interlocked cameras whose lenses were positioned to approximate the distance between the human eyes recorded a scene on two separate negatives. In the theater, when the two positive prints were projected simultaneously onto the screen from the same angles as the camera lenses, spectators wearing disposable glasses with polarized lenses perceived them as a single three-dimensional image. Roundly trashed by reviewers, *Bwana Devil* nevertheless became a phenomenal box-office hit, and the studios were so impressed that most of them rushed into 3-D production, using either Natural Vision or some other stereoscopic process.

As film historian Arthur Knight points out, the great appeal of Natural Vision for Hollywood was that it required no large-scale conversion of existing equipment, as did Cinerama, but only the addition of a twin-lens Natural Vision camera. Similarly, the cost of projector installation to exhibitors was less than $2,000, a bargain compared with Cinerama's $75,000. The second Natural Vision feature, Warner Bros.' *House of Wax* (André De Toth, 1953; re-released in 1971), featuring six-track stereophonic sound, was a critical as well as a popular success, returning $5.5 million on an investment of $680,000, and the race to produce "depthies," as the trade press was now calling them, became a stampede.

Between 1953 and 1954, Hollywood produced sixty-nine features in 3-D, mostly action films that could exploit the depth illusion, such as Westerns, science-fiction, and horror films. The craze for stereoscopic 3-D reached its peak in June 1953, when Warners announced that two of its upcoming super-productions, *A Star Is Born* and *East of Eden*, would be shot in Natural Vision. In fact, the only big-budget films made in 3-D were MGM's *Kiss Me Kate* (George Sidney, 1953) and Warners' *Dial M for Murder* (Hitchcock, 1954), both released flat in 1954 because the popularity of the process had suddenly taken a nosedive.



Shirley Tegge in an advertisement for the polarized 3-D process called Natural Vision used in *Bwana Devil* (Arch Oboler, 1952).

Stereoscopic 3-D died that year for a number of reasons. One was that producers found it difficult to make serious narrative films in such a gimmicky process, although Hitchcock's work, as usual, was an exception. Most of the 3-D films of 1953–1954 were blatant attempts to exploit the illusion of stereoscopic depth by having animals leap and people hurl objects into the Natural Vision camera lens. Another problem was that the illusion of depth created by 3-D was not particularly authentic or satisfying because the planes of depth within the image were highly stratified. Things appeared not in the round, as they do in a hologram, but as a series of stratified two-dimensional planes. In fact, deep-focus widescreen photography is capable of producing a greater illusion of depth than stereoscopic 3-D. Also, people disliked wearing the polarized glasses necessary to achieve the 3-D effect; many complained of eyestrain and headaches. Yet the biggest single factor in 3-D's demise was probably the sweeping nationwide success in the fall of 1953 of a self-proclaimed rival, the anamorphic widescreen process patented by 20th Century–Fox as CinemaScope.

The Anamorphic Widescreen Processes

The new optical format that came to stay during the war with television was **CinemaScope**, which arrived in September 1953 with 20th Century–Fox's biblical epic *The Robe* (Henry Koster). Though nonstereoscopic, this process exploited depth through peripheral vision and advertised itself to 3-D's disadvantage as "The Modern Miracle You See without Glasses." This system was based on the "Hypergonar" anamorphic distorting lens invented by Dr. Henri Chrétien (1879–1956) and first used in film as early as 1928, in Claude Autant-Lara's *Construire un feu* (*Build a Fire*; released 1930). In it, a wide-field image is "squeezed" laterally by a cylindrical lens with a compression ratio of 2:1 onto conventional 35mm film stock and redeemed as a widescreen image by a compensating lens in projection. The conventional **aspect ratio** of the cinema screen (the ratio of width to height), known as the **Academy aperture**, had been standardized at 4:3, or 1.33:1, in 1932 by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. CinemaScope offered a radically new ratio of 2.55:1 (approximately 8:3), subsequently reduced to 2.35:1, which gave the screen image a broadly oblong shape like that of Cinerama and similarly enhanced peripheral vision when used in combination with a curved screen.

The process also featured four-track stereophonic sound recorded magnetically on the film strip, and it was aggressively marketed by Fox as a cost-effective alternative to both 3-D and Cinerama. CinemaScope had the distinct advantage of requiring no special cameras, film stock, or projectors. It only required special lenses, a metallized widescreen, and a four-track magnetic stereophonic sound system, in a package costing between $15,000 and $25,000, depending on the size of the theater. (The price dropped considerably in July 1954 when Fox made the stereo equipment optional.) Its initial disadvantages were a loss of picture brightness, because standard projectors were designed to illuminate less than half the screen area required for widescreen (Fox's reflective Miracle Mirror screen helped compensate for this loss by directing light into the useful seating area of the theater), and problems of geometrical distortion inherent in the early lenses manufactured by Bausch & Lomb. Because these were curved outward to extend their peripheries, objects in close-up appeared disproportionately large, and horizontal lines seemed to run the wrong way at the edges of the frame; distortion was also common in lateral movement across the frame and in tracking shots.



A publicity still of Marilyn Monroe—unsqueezed and squeezed—by an anamorphic lens.

Finally, textures could become grainy and colors indistinct through the blowing-up process: the early **Scope** image was often described as fuzzy. Nevertheless, CinemaScope brought the widescreen revolution to the everyday world of functional filmmaking because, unlike Cinerama and 3-D, it was cheap, flexible, and simple enough to be used on a regular basis in commercial cinema.

Most important, the public adored it. *The Robe* was an indifferent DeMille-like spectacle, but its box-office receipts of more than $17 million in the year of its release made it the third most lucrative production in the history of American film, after *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Gone with the Wind* (1939). Within the next few months, the anamorphic process took Hollywood by storm, as Fox agreed to sell its CinemaScope lenses and conversion kits to rival production companies. At first, Fox president Spyros Skouras insisted that all CinemaScope productions be shot in full color and

with four-track stereo, but he soon relaxed these conditions in order to accommodate smaller producers and exhibitors who could not afford to convert their sound systems.

By the end of 1953, every major studio in Hollywood except Paramount had been licensed to make CinemaScope films, 75 full-color anamorphic features were in production, and 5,000 theater installations had been performed. A year later, the latter figure had tripled, and by 1957, CinemaScope had virtually saturated the market, with 84.5 percent of all U.S. and Canadian theaters (17,644 of 20,971) converted to the process. Indeed, the widescreen look had become so popular that films still shot in the old ratio of 1.33:1 were cropped for exhibition—that is, their tops and bottoms were masked in projection and the image was cast over a wider area of the screen, which was ultimately standardized at 1.85:1 in the United States and 1.66:1 in Europe. In the next few years, a great many problems with the CinemaScope system were solved. The aspect ratio was reduced from 2.55:1 to 2.35:1, which gave the image more visual density in projection, and the anamorphic lenses were consistently improved to give a sharper and clearer screen image.

In 1960, Robert E. Gottschalk invented the variable prismatic **Panavision** lens, which offered a nearly distortion-free definition of image to anamorphic films, and Panavision gradually replaced CinemaScope as the leading anamorphic system. Today, it is practically the only process used in 35mm widescreen cinematography, except for films shot in digital 3-D. By the mid-1950s, the conversion to anamorphic widescreen films in America was nearly total, and the process spread rapidly to other parts of the world, as foreign audiences found themselves suddenly confronted by a bewildering array of "scopes." In 1956 alone, France introduced Franscope and Dyaliscope, Italy contributed Ultrascope and Colorscope, Sweden Agascope, the USSR Sovscope, and Japan Tohoscope, Daieiscope, and Nikkatsuscope; all were variations of the CinemaScope system.

There was a single holdout in Hollywood, however. Paramount had refused to adopt an anamorphic process on the advice of its technicians, who said that the squeezing and blowing-up process would debase the visual quality of the image. They also thought that the ribbonlike CinemaScope image was too long and narrow to permit good composition. Accordingly, in April 1954 in *White Christmas* (Michael Curtiz), Paramount introduced its own widescreen system



Danny Kaye, Vera-Ellen, Rosemary Clooney, and Bing Crosby in *White Christmas* (Michael Curtiz, 1954): VistaVision (originally 1.66:1 at premiere; 1.85:1 thereafter).

called **VistaVision**. This was a unique non-anamorphic process in which 35mm film stock was run through the camera horizontally, rather than vertically, to produce a double-frame negative (eight sprocket holes per frame) twice as wide as the conventional 35mm frame and slightly taller. The negative was then optically rotated 90 degrees in the printing process so that the positive prints could run vertically on any projector. (VistaVision films were occasionally shown full-frame on horizontal transport projectors—as, for example, at the system's premiere at Radio City Music Hall, where *White Christmas* appeared on a giant 55-by-30-foot screen—but the normal practice was to reduce the image in printing to standard 35mm stock, increasing not its size but its density.)

The VistaVision aspect ratio was variable from 1.33:1 to 1.96:1 and could therefore accommodate any theater, but Paramount recommended projection in the "golden ratio" of 1.85:1 to achieve a modified widescreen effect. The enhanced picture resolution and clarity produced by VistaVision's larger negative was immediately apparent to audiences, and exhibitors liked the system because it required no modification of existing equipment. VistaVision films were released in Perspecta sound, an audio process that used a single optical track for playback through a conventional single speaker but that could be combined with a Perspecta Sound Integrator to produce a simulated stereo effect through three horns. The Perspecta Sound Integrator and speakers cost less than half the price of Fox's four-track stereo, and the process was a highly effective marketing tool for Paramount among exhibitors. Paramount continued to use the VistaVision process during the entire decade. In 1961, following the release of *One-Eyed Jacks* (Marlon Brando), the studio converted to the perfected Panavision anamorphic process for financial reasons, but VistaVision is still used extensively today in optical special-effects work.

The Non-Anamorphic, or Wide-Film, Widescreen Processes

As theater screens grew increasingly large in response to public demand (many measuring three to four times their original size), one of the reasons for Paramount's dissatisfaction with CinemaScope became apparent. The anamorphic image cast on a 60-by-30-foot screen lost clarity and brightness because its visual information was distributed across too large a field through the magnification process. The only technical answer to this problem was to increase the actual width of the film stock itself so that it would correspond to the wide field of the camera lens. Then the visual information from the photographic field and the visual information recorded on the negative film stock would be approximately proportional in scale, and the positive print would reproduce the density of the photographic field in projection.

Yet the introduction of wide-gauge film would require special wide-gauge projectors, and the studios were loath to force another expensive conversion on the exhibitors, with whom relations had become increasingly strained since the Paramount decrees of 1948. One way to meet the problem was to shoot a wide-film negative and reduce it photographically to 35mm for projection, which would increase the visual density of the image without altering its shape. This was the method used most often by VistaVision and Fox's experimental wide-film process, CinemaScope 55.

Nevertheless, in 1955, a 70mm wide-film process was introduced to selected American theaters in a film version of the 1943 Rodgers and Hammerstein Broadway hit *Oklahoma!* (Fred Zinnemann), independently produced by Michael Todd (1909–1958). The process, called Todd-AO, was developed by the American Optical Company and designed to compete not only with CinemaScope, but with Cinerama as well, because its wide-gauge film and wide-angle lenses offered the wraparound visual coverage of that process without resorting to its multiple cameras and projectors. Designed for running at 30 fps to enhance its resolution, Todd-AO proved to be a beautifully precise optical system, and *Oklahoma!*—which also featured six-track stereophonic sound—was a huge financial success. (Like nearly all wide-film processes, Todd-AO used a 65mm negative to produce a 70mm projection print, with the extra 5mm carrying the six magnetic sound tracks.)

Todd produced two more blockbusters using the process—the elephantine *Around the World in 80 Days* (Michael Anderson, 1956) and the spectacularly garish *South Pacific* (Joshua Logan, 1958)—then died in a plane crash in 1958. Fox purchased the rights to the system at that time and produced eight films in Todd-AO thereafter, including the multimillion-dollar *Cleopatra* (1963) and *The Sound of Music* (1965).

Other wide-film systems developed simultaneously with Todd-AO were Super Panavision (or Panavision 70), which used an unsqueezed 65mm negative for projection in either a 35mm or a 70mm format; and Ultra Panavision 70, which combined anamorphic and wide-gauge principles to squeeze a wide-field



Shirley Jones and Gordon MacRae in *Oklahoma!* (Fred Zinnemann, 1955): Todd-AO (originally 2.20:1).

image onto 65mm stock (the squeeze ratio was only 1.25:1, but since the picture area was already 2.25:1, the 70mm anamorphic positive projected an image with the enormous aspect ratio of 2.75:1, which was perfect for epic spectacle but probably not much else—MGM's gargantuan *Mutiny on the Bounty* [1962], for example, used this process).

All of these other wide-film systems, however, were subject to the same limitations as Todd's process. Wide-film cameras are bulky (at least twice the normal size) and difficult to move, especially since wide-angle lenses are subject to distortion in panning. And, similar to Cinerama, the wide-film processes are very expensive to use; everything—film stock, shooting, processing, exhibition (often at a higher than normal frames-per-second rate)—costs about twice as much as it would in a conventional 35mm film. For these reasons, the wide-film systems and Cinerama in the 1960s were used almost solely for spectacular productions, such as *El Cid* (Anthony Mann, 1961), *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968), which could be "road-shown"—toured from city to city for exclusive engagements at inflated admission prices to recoup high production costs.

For general release, such films were usually reduced to 35mm prints for anamorphic projection. Wide-film systems continue to provide the most optically flawless widescreen image, but today it is rare for films to be shot in a 65mm negative because of the expense. Instead, the vast majority of widescreen films—which is to say the vast majority of films—are either made in an anamorphic process or shot in 35mm and matted to a ratio of 1.85:1 in printing or projection.



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[1] *Mutiny on the Bounty* (Lewis Milestone, 1962): Ultra Panavision 70 (originally 2.75:1). [2] *Lawrence of Arabia* (David Lean, 1962): Super Panavision, also known as Panavision 70 (originally 2.20:1).

An important footnote to the coming of the widescreen processes is that it produced a nearly total conversion from optical to magnetic sound recording (although sound was still played back optically in exhibition). As already noted, most early widescreen films—whatever their process—were accompanied by multiple-track stereophonic sound recorded magnetically either on a separate strip (Cinerama) or on the film strip itself (CinemaScope, Todd-AO, etc.). Multiple-track stereo not only inundated the audience with realistic sound and enhanced the illusion of depth, but allowed early widescreen filmmakers to use sound *directionally* by having dialogue and naturalistic effects emanate from that portion of the huge screen appropriate to the image at a given moment. Thus, stereophonic sound permitted a director to differentiate aurally what was often undifferentiated visually within the vast space of the early widescreen frame. As we have seen, most theaters outside of large cities could not afford the conversion to stereophonic speaker systems in the 1950s.

After the widescreen revolution, however, magnetic sound became the preferred means of recording and mixing in all segments of the industry because of its flexibility, its accuracy, and the compactness of its equipment. By the late 1970s, the use of a wireless eight-track recording system that employs miniature radio microphones and the **Dolby** noise reduction system for playback in exhibition was increasingly common.

Adjusting to Widescreen

The advent of the widescreen processes in many ways parallels the introduction of sound. Once again, a financially troubled industry gambled on a novelty long implicit in the medium, and once again the novelty produced a technological and aesthetic revolution that changed the narrative form of the cinema. Like sound, widescreen photography presented many difficulties to filmmakers used to an older mode of production. Close-ups were suddenly problematic, given the vast size of widescreen images and the tendency of early anamorphic lenses to distort them. Even undistorted, on a 60-foot screen close-ups frequently appeared ludicrous, menacing, or both, which made critics wonder whether intimate scenes would be possible in the widescreen medium at all.

Montage became problematic for the same reason: the perceptual disorientation produced by the rapid intercutting of widescreen images was less exciting than simply confusing. Focal shifts and tracking shots were similarly subject to distortion. Finally, composition and lighting for the widescreen image were difficult for directors and camera operators accustomed to the 4:3 rectangle of the Academy frame. Because early anamorphic lenses had short focal lengths (and, therefore, shallow depth of field), for example, deep-focus composition was initially out of the question.

There was, moreover, the purely practical problem of how to fill and balance all of that newly available space. For these reasons, many felt that the widescreen processes would destroy the cinema as an art form, and it is true that similar to the first sound films, the first widescreen films were static and theatrical, with a heavy-handed emphasis on spectacle.

Yet as widescreen filmmaking practices and optics were refined during the 1950s and into the 1960s, it became apparent that many of the initial assumptions about the limitations of widescreen were false. With certain stylistic modifications, close-ups and montage were not only possible, but more effective in widescreen than in the old format; intimate scenes *could* be played with total authenticity in widescreen; and the cinema did *not* ultimately succumb to circus spectacle as a result of its new shape and size. For one thing, a director using widescreen could bring his characters into a tight close-up without eliminating the background and the middle ground of the shot, as often happened in Academy ratio close-ups of the 1930s and the 1940s. He could also have two or even three speaking characters in close-up, with ample space between their faces, instead of having to cut back and forth from one to the other or to squeeze them together artificially within the narrow borders of the Academy frame.

Furthermore, with the introduction of distortion-free, variable-focus Panavision lenses in the early 1960s, it became clear that widescreen could greatly enhance the image's capacity for depth (and thus for spectator involvement), as well as width, due to increased peripheral vision. Whereas early widescreen pioneers such as Otto Preminger (*River of No Return*, 1954), Elia Kazan (*East of Eden*, 1955), and Nicholas Ray (*Rebel without a Cause*, 1955) had been able to exploit compositional depth only by pushing against the limits of their technology (by using big, brightly lit sets or by shooting out of doors in direct sunlight, for example, which enabled them to stop down their lens apertures), by the mid-1960s, for all practical purposes, the deep-focus capacity that Welles and Toland had labored so hard to attain in *Citizen Kane* (1941) had suddenly become available to any director who possessed the imagination to use it.



James Dean and Natalie Wood in *Rebel without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955): intimacy in CinemaScope (originally 2.55:1). With widescreen, a director could now have two or more characters speaking in close-up with ample space between their faces, bypassing the need to edit back and forth between the characters.

Finally, for a variety of reasons, widescreen encouraged the use of longer-than-average takes, and it seems clear today that the widescreen processes created the functional grounds for a new film aesthetic based on composition in width and depth, or mise-en-scène, rather than on montage.

In this new aesthetic, which might be called the long-take or mise-en-scène aesthetic, the major emphasis would shift from editing to shooting, because a long take composed in width and depth is capable of containing a long shot, a medium shot, and a close-up, action and reaction, within a single frame without resorting to fragmentation of the image. At least one veteran Hollywood director recognized this as early as 1955. In an interview with the British film journal *Sight and Sound*, Henry King said, "This lens [the anamorphic] enables the director . . . for the first time to show on the screen cause and effect in the same shot, whereas before we used to have to *cut* from cause to effect in a story." [italics added]

Obviously, film narratives would continue to be assembled through the editing process, but the primary unit of narration would no longer be the dialectical shot (or the "montage cell," in Eisenstein's phrase) but the long take or sequence shot composed in width and depth and/or constantly moving to reframe significant dramatic action. Theorists of the long-take aesthetic, such as André Bazin and his follower Charles Barr, would later maintain (in *Cahiers du cinéma* and the British journal *Movie*, respectively) that the long take preserves the integrity of time and space by linking foreground, middle ground, and background within the same shot, whereas montage destroys it.

The close-up is a case in point (ironically, because early critics thought widescreen incapable of close-ups). In montage, the figure in close-up is divorced from its background by virtue of both focal limitations and the rapidity with which images flash on the screen. In the long-take close-up, the figure in close-up is temporally and spatially linked with its environment by virtue of the shot's mise-en-scène, and for Bazin and Barr, at least, this constitutes a more authentic mode of representation than the dissociated close-up of montage.

According to the long-take theorists, montage evolved over time because it was the first technologically feasible way to structure film, or to give it "speech." However, in the 1950s and the 1960s, they argued, the technology of cutting was usurped by the technology of shooting, so that the radical fragmentation of montage could be replaced by the organization of complex images within the frame. This is certainly true to the extent that the widescreen image, composed in depth, is capable of containing much more visual information than the old Academy frame, and its greater visual density makes it the perfect medium for rendering detail, texture, and atmosphere in relation to character.

Finally, both Bazin and Barr insisted that the width-and-depth perspective created by the widescreen long take offers the viewer a "democratic" and "creative" alternative to the manipulative process of montage. Though shot composition can guide his or her seeing to some extent, they reasoned, the viewer of a long take can choose which details or actions to concentrate on within a given shot, rather than have them pointed out by close-ups or be drawn to some inexorable conclusion through a montage sequence, such as Eisenstein's massacre on the Odessa steps.

Although montage was the traditional aesthetic of the cinema, extending from Griffith through Eisenstein to the classical Hollywood paradigm of the studio years, Bazin and his followers were able to construct a historical countertradition for the long-take aesthetic stretching back to Feuillade and including the "integral style" of von Stroheim and Murnau, the deep-focus "realism" of Renoir and Welles, and the postwar neorealism of Rossellini and De Sica. According to this version of film history, Welles began the revolution in favor of the long take with *Citizen Kane* in 1941, and the arrival of widescreen technology in the early 1950s assured its permanent success. As a corrective to the influence of Soviet-style montage and three decades of classical Hollywood continuity editing, the Bazinian view was healthy, if impressionistic (overlooking, for example, the integration of montage and mise-en-scène in *both* Griffith and Welles). In any case, though, it took the widescreen aesthetic yet another decade to evolve, and the years 1953–1960, similar to the years 1928–1935, witnessed much experimental blundering before the major artists of the new form of cinema could emerge.

The Widescreen "Blockbuster"

In Hollywood, the emergence of a widescreen aesthetic was delayed by the sudden proliferation of a venerable film type known as the "blockbuster," newly renovated to exploit the physical novelty of the big screen. These inflated multimillion-dollar productions were the widescreen counterparts of the "100 percent all-talking, all-singing, all-dancing" films of the early sound period—lavish and excessively lengthy super-spectacles in the DeMille tradition, every element of which was made to subserve sheer visual magnitude.

The blockbuster craze started in 1956, when King Vidor's *War and Peace* (VistaVision; 3 hours, 28 minutes), Michael Anderson's *Around the World in 80 Days* (Todd-AO; 2 hours, 58 minutes), and Cecil B. DeMille's remake of his own *The Ten Commandments* (VistaVision; 3 hours, 39 minutes) were all released simultaneously in wide-film widescreen processes and full stereophonic sound. Because the production costs for blockbusters were abnormally high, the films had to have a correspondingly high box-office gross simply to break even, and this factor, combined with their artistic unwieldiness, would ultimately destroy them. Yet for a while, they reigned supreme. *Around the World in 80 Days*, for example, which cost $6 million to produce, grossed more than $22 million in the year of its release, and *The Ten Commandments*, which cost $13.5 million, grossed nearly $43 million.

By the early 1960s, production budgets for blockbusters had grown so large through inflation that most were produced abroad in Italy (by Dino De Laurentiis at Rome's Cinecittà studios), Spain (at Samuel Bronston's vast studio complex on the outskirts of Madrid), and Yugoslavia (at the Zagreb studios) to cut costs. Even so, many went down to ruin at the box office, alerting producers to the fact that the blockbuster trend had exhausted itself with the public. Yet the film that demonstrated this most graphically was Joseph L. Mankiewicz's disastrous *Cleopatra* (1963—Todd-AO; 4 hours, 3 minutes), which took four years and $40 million to produce, nearly wrecking 20th Century–Fox. This film had returned only half of its negative costs by 1964 and did not break even until its sale to network television in 1966. Other blockbusters were made in the mid-1960s, including the fantastically successful *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965), but few were able to recover their production costs before sale to television, and producers turned away from the blockbuster policy until it was revived, with substantial modifications, in the mid-seventies.

American Directors in the Early Widescreen Age

Some American films that are notable for their early innovative use of widescreen are Otto Preminger's *River of No Return* (1954), John Sturges's *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955), Elia Kazan's *East of Eden* (1955), Douglas Sirk's *Magnificent Obsession* (1954) and *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), Robert Aldrich's



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[1] Charlton Heston in *The Ten Commandments* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1956): VistaVision (originally 1.85:1). [2] Elizabeth Taylor in *Cleopatra* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1963): Todd-AO (originally 2.20:1); the blockbuster that nearly sank 20th Century–Fox.



Spencer Tracy and Ernest Borgnine in *Bad Day at Black Rock* (John Sturges, 1955): CinemaScope (originally 2.55:1).

Vera Cruz (1954), Budd Boetticher's *Ride Lonesome* (1959), Anthony Mann's *The Man from Laramie* (1955), Samuel Fuller's *Hell and High Water* (1954), and Sam Peckinpah's *Ride the High Country* (1962). Nearly all of these films were shot in CinemaScope or Panavision, and some are obviously less important in themselves than for their purely formal achievements, but most of their directors were major talents who made other significant films during the 1950s and the early 1960s. As usual, Hitchcock was different. His work in VistaVision—*To Catch a Thief* (1955), *The Trouble with Harry* (1955), *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), *Vertigo* (1958), and *North by Northwest* (1959)—formed a category unto itself, with *Vertigo* standing as the single greatest film of the 1950s and perhaps of the entire postwar American cinema.

In addition to pioneering widescreen composition, Otto Preminger (1906–1986) made major contributions to the social history of American film by breaking both the Production Code, with *The Moon Is Blue* (1953), a sex farce; *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), about narcotics addiction; and *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959), a courtroom drama about rape; and the blacklist, by giving Dalton Trumbo screen credit for writing the script for *Exodus* (1960). Moreover, his haunting film noir of 1944, *Laura*, and the semi-documentary *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1950) are minor classics of their respective genres.

Stage director Elia Kazan (b. 1909) gave the 1950s three of its most persuasive and characteristic films: *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951; adapted by Tennessee Williams from his own play), *Viva Zapata!* (1952; from an original story and screenplay by John Steinbeck), and *On the Waterfront* (1954; from an original story and screenplay by Budd Schulberg), all starring Marlon Brando (1924–2004). Much of Kazan's work

of the era was shaped in one form or another by his friendly testimony before HUAC in 1952, in the course of which he denounced former colleagues at New York's radical Group Theater as Communists.

In his films of the 1950s, especially *Rebel without a Cause* (1955), Nicholas Ray (born Raymond Nicholas Kienzle, 1911–1979) provided a definitive statement of the spiritual and emotional ills that beset America during the period. Initially identified with *film gris* (*Knock on Any Door* [1949]) and film noir (*They Live by Night* [1947, released 1949], *In a Lonely Place* [1950], and *On Dangerous Ground* [1951]), Ray simultaneously became a cult figure in Europe and one of the highest-paid directors in Hollywood until his career collapsed beneath the weight of two commercially unsuccessful blockbusters, *King of Kings* (1961) and *55 Days at Peking* (1963).

Douglas Sirk (b. Detlef Sierck, in Denmark, 1900–1987) proved himself to be a master stylist of color in *Magnificent Obsession* (1954), *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), *Written on the Wind* (1957), *Interlude* (1957), and *Imitation of Life* (1959)—a series of visually stunning melodramas that are classics of their type.

Robert Aldrich (1918–1983) emerged at this time as America's most powerful practitioner of post-1940s film noir in *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955; adapted from Mickey Spillane), a masterpiece of the form whose commercial success led Aldrich to establish his own production company, Associates and Aldrich, for which he directed twelve films in the next seventeen years. Aldrich had



Rock Hudson and Jane Wyman in *All That Heaven Allows* (Douglas Sirk, 1955): CinemaScope (originally 2.55:1).



El Cid (Anthony Mann, 1961): Super Technirama (originally 2.20:1).

begun his directing career in television, and his first big-budget film had been the boisterous widescreen Western *Vera Cruz* (1954), shot on location in Mexico.

Other filmmakers associated with adult themes during the 1950s were John Huston (1906–1987), Budd Boetticher (1916–2001), and Anthony Mann (1906–1967). Originally an actor and a screenwriter, Huston had become famous as a director during the 1940s through his classic detective film *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and his classic adventure film *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948), both of which have proved highly influential. After directing *Key Largo* (1948), a moody adaptation of Maxwell Anderson's play, Huston began the 1950s with a surge of creative energy in the naturalistic film noir *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950), a documentary-like adaptation of Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1951), and the award-winning *The African Queen* (1951), his first theatrical film in color. For the rest of the decade, Huston displayed his talents for both parody and imaginative literary adaptation (*Moulin Rouge*, 1952; *Moby Dick*, 1956). In fact, the written word remained a major source of Huston's inspiration in his later career.

Boetticher and Mann were the architects of the modern adult Western during the 1950s, but both were also notable for other kinds of films. Mann, for example, began his career as a specialist in such gritty, low-budget film noirs as *Desperate* (1947), *Railroaded* (1947), *Raw Deal* (1948), and *T-Men* (1948) for B-studios such as Eagle-Lion, but by the early 1960s, he had become an acknowledged master of the widescreen epic in *El Cid* (1961) and *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964).

Stanley Donen (b. 1924) and Vincente Minnelli (1903–1986) were also closely associated with a single genre during the 1950s (the musical), but Donen later dealt successfully in suspense and romantic comedy, while Minnelli was able to turn a number of literary potboilers into gorgeously stylized widescreen melodramas. Their later work is discussed in the following sections.

1950s Genres

Despite the balanced work of many fine craftsmen, Hollywood's mania for producing films on a vast scale in the 1950s affected even the conventional dramatic feature. For one thing, the standard feature length rose from ninety minutes to an average of three hours before stabilizing at a more manageable two hours in the mid-1960s. Moreover, there was a tendency on the part of the studios to package every class-A production as a splashy, big-budget spectacle, whether or not this format suited the material. Thus, from 1955 to 1965, most traditional American genres experienced an inflation of production values that destroyed their original forms and caused them to be re-created in new ones.



The Musical

The Hollywood musical had reached an exquisitely high point of sophistication and color at the turn of the decade under the auspices of the MGM producer Arthur Freed (1894–1973), who in the mid- to late 1940s assembled a stellar production unit featuring the talented directors Vincente Minnelli and Stanley Donen; the choreographer-directors Charles Walters (1911–1982) and Gene Kelly (1912–1996); and such gifted performers as Kelly himself, Fred Astaire, Judy Garland, June Allyson, and Cyd Charisse. During the next decade, this team produced some thirty medium-budget musicals.

As a professional lyricist himself, Freed believed that musical production numbers should be integrated with a film's dialogue and plot, rather than stand alone as intermezzos. In theory, this meant that the songs and the dances should serve to advance the narrative, but in practice, it produced the unrealistic convention of a character's bursting into song at the slightest dramatic provocation. The first such "integrated" musical was probably *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), for which Freed was the associate producer, but by the time of *On the Town*, integration had become the state of the art, and the practice was continued during the 1950s and the 1960s. By 1955, however, the musical genre contracted a fifteen-year case of elephantiasis, as well as a compulsion to abandon original scripts in favor of adapting successful stage plays, often concurrently running hits.

Such Broadway vehicles as *Oklahoma!* (Fred Zimmermann, 1955), *South Pacific* (Joshua Logan, 1958), *West Side Story* (Robert Wise, 1961), *The Music Man* (Morton da Costa, 1962), *Gypsy* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1962), and *My Fair Lady* (George Cukor, 1964) proved successful with the public, although many of them employed stars who could neither sing nor dance (the voices of professional singers were frequently dubbed in, and professional dancers stood in for the production numbers), and many were directed by men who had never filmed a musical before.

This tendency peaked with the release of 20th Century–Fox's astoundingly popular film *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965), the ultimate big-budget super-musical, which grossed more money ($79 million in domestic rentals) than any previous American film. *The Sound of Music* (subsequently known in the industry as "The Sound of Money" and to the readers of critic Pauline Kael as "The Sound of Mucus") was a glossily professional adaptation of a Rodgers and Hammerstein stage musical, based on the true story of the Trapp family singers and their heroic escape from Nazi-occupied Austria. The huge success of this film gave rise to a host of multimillion-dollar descendants—*Camelot* (Joshua Logan, 1967); *Star!* (Robert Wise, 1968); *Doctor Dolittle* (Richard Fleischer, 1967); *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* (Herbert Ross, 1969); *Oliver!* (Carol Reed, 1968); and *Hello, Dolly!* (Gene Kelly, 1969)—all of which lost money, glutted the public on musicals, and virtually killed the form of the genre as it had evolved since the 1930s by blowing it out of all proportion.

(left) Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965): Todd-AO (originally 2.20:1).

Comedy

Comedy was another genre that suffered seriously from widescreen inflation and the generally depressed social ambiance of the McCarthy–Cold War era, although there were clear exceptions. The strong point of big-budget widescreen comedy was less verbal or visual wit than excellent production values. This was, after all, the chief strategic element in Hollywood's war on television, and for a while the strategy worked, although television continued to woo both audiences and comedians away from the cinema as the decade progressed.

Bob Hope (1903–2003; *Son of Paleface* [Frank Tashlin, 1952]) and Danny Kaye (1913–1987; *The Court Jester* [Norman Panama, 1956]), whose film careers had begun in the previous decade, were both popular in class-A productions during the 1950s, as was the slapstick team of Dean Martin (1917–1995) and Jerry Lewis (b. 1926), who made seventeen films together between 1949 and 1956, the best of them directed by Frank Tashlin and Norman Taurog. When the team split up in 1956, Martin transitioned to a successful career in television, while Lewis went on to become a major comic star in such films as *The Delicate Delinquent* (Don McGuire, 1957) and *The Geisha Boy* (Tashlin, 1958), ultimately directing (and often writing and producing) his own films in the 1960s—for example, *The Nutty Professor* (1963) and *The Family Jewels* (1965). Lewis was long regarded by the French as a major *auteur*, but his idiotic comic persona never found much favor with American critics. Lewis will probably most be remembered for his technological innovations (for example, he used multiple closed-circuit television cameras to monitor his performances instantaneously, and he pioneered video-assist technology for his 1960s productions, which has since become an industry standard).

Much more sophisticated than Lewis, and certainly as brilliant as Hope and Kaye, were the era's two major comedians: Judy Holliday (1922–1965) and Marilyn Monroe (1926–1962). Both appeared in a number of witty, adult comedies (for example, Holliday in *Born Yesterday* [1950] and Monroe in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* [1953]) before early deaths cut short their careers.

These films were succeeded by the sanitized sexiness of the expensively produced Rock Hudson/Doris Day battle-of-the-sexes cycle, beginning in 1959 with *Pillow Talk* (Michael Gordon), and continuing through *Lover Come Back* (Delbert Mann, 1961) and *Send Me No Flowers* (Norman Jewison, 1964). Such films and others that imitated them were in turn succeeded by a cycle of cynical, big-budget sex comedies concerned with the strategies of seduction, for example, David Swift's *Under the Yum-Yum Tree* (1963) and Richard Quine's *Sex and the Single Girl* (1964), which reflected, sometimes rather perversely, the "sexual revolution" of the late 1960s.

Related to the amoral cynicism of this cycle was what might best be called the "corporate comedy" of films such as *Cash McCall* (Joseph Pevney, 1959) and *The Wheeler Dealers* (Arthur Hiller, 1963), which dealt openly and humorously with business fraud and prefigured the morass of corporate and governmental deceit underlying the Watergate scandals of the 1970s.

The dark genius of American comedy during this period was the German émigré director Billy Wilder (b. Samuel Wilder, 1906–2002), who began the 1950s with the relentlessly cynical *Ace in the Hole* (also known as *The Big Carnival*, 1951), which portrayed the media circus created by a corrupt reporter around a New Mexico mining disaster and won an international prize at Venice, but he began increasingly to specialize in comédie noire in such films as *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), *Stalag 17* (1953), *The Seven Year Itch* (1955), and *Some Like It Hot* (1959). He entered the 1960s with *The Apartment* (1960), a film about the battle of the sexes made in dark parody of the Hudson/Day cycle, which won numerous critical accolades and awards, including Oscars for Best Film and Best Direction. Wilder always co-authored his own screenplays, in close collaboration with such professional scriptwriters as Charles Brackett, Raymond Chandler, George Axelrod, and I.A.L. Diamond (Wilder began his film career as a scriptwriter for UFA).

Through the influence of Wilder and others (for instance, Stanley Kubrick in *Dr. Strangelove* [1964], a radical masterpiece far in advance of its time), American comedy became increasingly sophisticated through the 1950s and the 1960s, until it emerged in the 1970s as a wholly adult genre.



Doris Day and Rock Hudson in *Pillow Talk* (Michael Gordon, 1959): CinemaScope (originally 2.55:1).

The Western

The genre that seems to have best survived the widescreen inflation of the 1950s and the 1960s is the Western, where the landscape provides a naturally important element, although Westerns, too, experienced some major changes in attitude and theme corresponding to changes in American society. The heroic, idealized, epic Western of John Ford and his imitators remained popular in the 1950s but was gradually replaced by what was called the "adult Western." This genre, whose prototypes were *The Gunfighter* (Henry King, 1950) and *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann, 1952), concentrated on the psychological or moral conflicts of the individual protagonist in relation to his society, rather than creating the poetic archetypes of order characteristic of Ford.

The directors Delmer Daves (1904–1977) and John Sturges (1911–1992) both contributed to the new psychological style during this period, but the foremost director of adult Westerns in the 1950s was Anthony Mann, who made eleven such films between 1950 and 1960, five of them in close collaboration with actor James Stewart (for example, *Winchester '73*, 1950). Mann's Westerns tended to be more intensely psychological and violent than those of his peers, and he was among the first to discover that the topography of the genre was uniquely suited to the widescreen format. In films such as *Bend of the River* (1952), *The Naked Spur* (1953), *The Man from Laramie* (1955), and *Man of the West* (1958), Mann carried the genre



James Stewart in *The Man from Laramie* (Anthony Mann, 1955): CinemaScope (originally 2.55:1).

permanently into the realm of adult entertainment with an austere visual style.

Mann's successor was Budd Boetticher, who directed a series of adult Westerns in collaboration with producer Harry Joe Brown and actor Randolph Scott for Ranown Productions in the late 1950s. In such films as *Seven Men from Now* (1956) and *Ride Lonesome* (1959), Boetticher forged elemental and even allegorical dramas of ethical heroism in which men alone are forced to make moral choices in a moral vacuum. The Fordian tradition of the epic romance was carried on, of course, by Ford himself in films such as *Rio Grande* (1950), and preeminently, *The Searchers* (1956), and by the makers of such "big" widescreen Westerns as *Shane* (George Stevens, 1953)—a film shot in the old ratio and disastrously blown up for widescreen exhibition—and *The Big Country* (William Wyler, 1958).

It was the Mann-Boetticher tradition that won out in the 1960s, as the early films of Sam Peckinpah (*The Deadly Companions*, 1961; *Ride the High Country*, 1962) clearly demonstrate. Yet the new-style Westerns were soon deeply influenced by another tradition, the Japanese samurai film, with its heavy emphasis on honor, fatality, and violence.

This influence was first demonstrated in John Sturges's violent and popular *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), a version of Akira Kurosawa's *The Seven Samurai* (1954) set in the American West. In both films, seven hardened warriors (gunmen in Sturges) are inexplicably driven to risk their lives to defend the inhabitants of a small rural village from bandits. *The Magnificent Seven* was a popular success and sparked an international trend toward samurai imitations that ultimately produced the "spaghetti Western"—violent films of the American West starring American actors that were shot in Italy or Yugoslavia by Italian filmmakers.

The master craftsman of the spaghetti Western was Sergio Leone (1921–1989), whose *A Fistful of Dollars*—a direct, almost shot-for-shot copy of Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* (1961), itself reputedly a version of Boetticher's *Buchanan Rides Alone*—started the cycle in 1964. Leone, who turned out to have talent of his own, followed up with *For a Few Dollars More* (1965); *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966); and finally, *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968)—a bold, brilliant parody of all of the mythic/romantic themes of the traditional American Western. The films of Leone and his many imitators tended to be stylish, colorful, and excessively bloody—the latter achieved



The Searchers (John Ford, 1956): VistaVision (originally 1.75:1).

through the practice of graphically depicting, for the first time on the screen, impact and exit wounds produced by bullets. They also played a major role in conditioning American audiences to the new levels of violence that were to emerge at the end of the decade in the non-Western gangster film *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967) and in Sam Peckinpah's apocalyptic *The Wild Bunch* (1969). The latter work probably did more to demythologize the American West than any single film of its era, but the process had been going on since Anthony Mann's *The Naked Spur* (1953).

Mann, Boetticher, Sturges (in *The Magnificent Seven*), the Italians, and Peckinpah evolved an antiheroic Western tradition counter to that of Ford. One important index of this change was a complete reversal of the genre's attitude toward Native Americans. The hostile savages of the 1930s, the 1940s, and most of the 1950s were suddenly presented as a race of gentle, intelligent people on whom the U.S. military establishment had committed genocide. Two films of the period, Ralph Nelson's *Soldier Blue* (1970) and Arthur Penn's *Little Big Man* (1970), graphically depicted the massacre of defenseless Indians by U.S. soldiers. From *Fort Apache* (John Ford, 1948) and *Red River* (Howard Hawks, 1948) to *Soldier Blue* (Ralph Nelson, 1970) and *The Wild Bunch* (Sam Peckinpah, 1969), the external form of the American Western did not significantly change. The Ford and Nelson films, for example, have the same subject, the same landscape, and very nearly the same plot, and *The Wild Bunch* duplicates many of the mythic elements of *Red River* without parody. It is the way in which these elements are viewed by American filmmakers and their audiences that has changed. That change is profound, but it has more to do with alterations in the way America perceives itself and its past than with the evolution of a film genre.

The Gangster Film and the Anticommunist Film

The gangster film, which had been replaced by the domestic-espionage film during the war, reemerged in the late 1940s under the influence of film noir. At that time, "dark" crime films, such as *The Naked City* (Jules Dassin, 1948), *Force of Evil* (Abraham Polonsky, 1948), *White Heat* (Raoul Walsh, 1949), *Gun Crazy* (Joseph H. Lewis, 1950), and *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (Otto

Preminger, 1950), tended to concentrate on the individual criminal in his relationship to the underworld. In the paranoid 1950s, the emphasis shifted from the individual wrongdoer to the existence of a nationwide criminal conspiracy, commonly known as "the syndicate," which was responsible for many of America's social ills—murder, gambling, prostitution, narcotics, and labor racketeering.

Since Prohibition, American gangster films have been firmly rooted in the reality of American crime, and—paranoia notwithstanding—that such a criminal conspiracy did exist and that it was closely connected with the Sicilian secret society known as the Mafia was demonstrated by the findings of the Senate Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime, headed by Senator Estes Kefauver, in 1951. Another type of gangster film, the biography of the Prohibition and/or Depression-era criminal, was initiated by Don Siegel's *Baby Face Nelson* (1957). Films in this cycle tended to rely on period reconstruction, and their apotheosis came in the late 1960s with Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), Roger Corman's *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre* (1967), and John Milius's *Dillinger* (1973).

Two interesting subtypes of the gangster film that appeared in the 1950s were the "caper" film and the "anti-Red" action thriller. The caper film, which began with John Huston's *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950), concentrates on the mechanics of pulling off a big, complicated heist and is still a very popular type. It is sometimes deadly serious, sometimes light and witty. The anti-Red action film was a localized, primitive type endemic to the early 1950s and exemplified by Robert Stevenson's *I Married a Communist* (also known as *The Woman on Pier 13*, 1949), Gordon Douglas's *I Was a Communist for the FBI* (1951), and Samuel Fuller's more morally ambiguous *Pickup on South Street* (1953). In this type, the criminal figure is a Communist spy, and the syndicate is the "international Communist conspiracy," but the traditional iconography of the gangster film is maintained.

The Communist-as-gangster film was part of a larger cycle of more than fifty anticommunist films produced by nearly every studio in Hollywood between 1948 and 1955 (the exceptions were Disney and Universal-International), in ritual self-abasement before HUAC and the minions of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Many of these, such as *The Iron Curtain* (William Wellman, 1948) and *The Red Menace* (R. G. Springsteen, 1949), had their roots in the World War II espionage film and simply substituted villainous Reds for villainous Nazis. Others were set inside the Iron Curtain and focused on innocent individuals attempting to get out, while still others posed as domestic melodramas, semidocumentaries, and science fiction.

Yet the ultimate anticommunist film was indisputably *My Son John* (1952), written, produced, and directed for Paramount by the talented Leo McCarey (1898–1969), one of the great comic filmmakers of the 1930s, who had apparently lost his sense of humor. A feverish blend of anti-intellectualism, oedipal obsession, and pseudo-Christian piety, *My Son John* stars the brilliant young actor Robert Walker (1918–1951) in his last role as a State Department Red, whose treachery stops just short of parricide. So impassioned and viscerally engaging is this film that it deserves to be ranked with *The Birth of a Nation* and *Triumph of the Will* among the cinema's definitive works of authoritarian propaganda, and like them, it has remained controversial since the day of its release.

The anticommunist cycle coincided almost precisely with the period between the first HUAC Hollywood hearings and the U.S. Senate's censure of Joseph McCarthy, but a trickle of films continued, and the central impulse of the anticommunist film was preserved in the James Bond espionage thrillers of the 1960s, which were adapted from the novels of British writer Ian Fleming and produced by Albert R. Broccoli and Harry Saltzman's London-based Eon Productions for distribution by United Artists.

These immensely popular films and their imitators in effect usurped the gangster genre between 1962 and 1969 by positing criminal conspiracy on a worldwide scale and offering violent gangsterism on the part of both the conspirators and the superhero ("licensed to kill") sent to stop them. Fleming's work was probably brought to the attention of Broccoli and Saltzman by an article that appeared in *Life* magazine on March 17, 1961, naming *From Russia with Love* as one of President John F. Kennedy's ten favorite books. The president didn't live to see the movie, whose American premiere was in April 1964, but Eon's sexy, gadget-ridden James Bond series became one of the most successful in motion-picture history, earning fifteen Academy Award nominations and nearly $600 billion in rentals from 1962 through 2012.

The Bond films of the 1960s greatly influenced the decade's popular culture, spawning many imitative television series, such as *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (1964–1968), *Secret Agent* (1965–1966), and *Mission: Impossible* (1966–1973). In the late 1950s and the early 1960s, the young directors of the French New Wave



Helen Hayes, Dean Jagger, and Robert Walker in *My Son John* (Leo McCarey, 1952): Academy frame (originally 1.33:1).

borrowed heavily from the conventions of the American gangster film in works such as *Breathless* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960) and *Shoot the Piano Player* (François Truffaut, 1960), but the genre remained dormant in America itself until 1967, when Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* revitalized it for the 1970s.

Penn's film, very much a product of the rebellious spirit of the late 1960s, owed a great deal stylistically to the example of the French New Wave, but *Bonnie and Clyde* also restored the gangster to his traditional position as tragic hero and unified the genre by borrowing motifs from three great crime films of the past—Fritz Lang's *You Only Live Once* (1937), Nicholas Ray's *They Live by Night* (1949), and Joseph Lewis's *Gun Crazy* (1950). Since *Bonnie and Clyde*, the gangster film, like the Western, has re-entered the mainstream of American cinema as the vehicle for serious artistic and social expression (e.g., *The Godfather* and *The Godfather, Part II*) that it was during the 1930s.

Science Fiction

Another interesting development of the 1950s was the emergence of the science-fiction film as a distinct genre. There had been films of science fantasy long before World War II. One of the first important narrative films, Georges Méliès's *Le voyage dans la lune* (1902), fits the description, as do Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926) and William Cameron Menzies's futuristic fantasy *Things to Come* (1936). Yet science fiction before World War II concentrated on individual conflicts, rather than global ones. With the war and the threat of nuclear holocaust came a widespread recognition that science and technology were in a position to affect the destiny of the entire human race, and shortly afterward, the modern science-fiction film, with its emphasis on global catastrophe and space travel, began to take shape.

The first important example of the form was *Destination Moon* (Irving Pichel, 1950), which was

followed rapidly by other films in this vein, such as *The Thing* (also known as *The Thing from Another World*; Christian Nyby, 1951), *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Robert Wise, 1951), *When Worlds Collide* (Rudolph Maté, 1951), *The War of the Worlds* (Byron Haskin, 1953), *Forbidden Planet* (Fred Wilcox, 1956), and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Don Siegel, 1956). All of these films were well produced on budgets of widely varying scale, and the element common to most was some form of world-threatening crisis produced by nuclear war or alien invasion—with obvious political implications.

In fact, with their constant warnings against infiltration and invasion, the paranoid politics of the Cold War permeated the science-fiction boom of the 1950s almost as thoroughly as did state-of-the-art special effects, which reached a new plateau in the early years of the decade with the films of producer George Pal (1908–1980) and special-effects director Ray Harryhausen (1920–2013). Pal, a native-born Hungarian whose brilliant matte work won Special Effects Oscars for *Destination Moon*, *When Worlds Collide*, and *The War of the Worlds*, had begun his career as a UFA set designer and became a puppet animator in Hollywood during the war. Harryhausen, a protégé of special-effects pioneer Willis O'Brien, specialized in a three-dimensional, stop-motion process that enabled him to combine animated models with live action. It was patented in 1957 as Dynamation, and versions of the technique were used in some of the best monster films of the 1950s, as well as in more elaborate mythological fantasies, such as *Jason and the Argonauts* (Don Chaffey, 1963) and *Clash of the Titans* (Desmond Davis, 1981).

All of the decade's science-fiction films contained an element of dread, but *The Thing*, which concerned the coming to Earth of a dangerous creature from another galaxy, started a phenomenally popular cycle of films about monsters and mutations produced by nuclear radiation or materialized from outer space that dominated the genre for the next ten years.

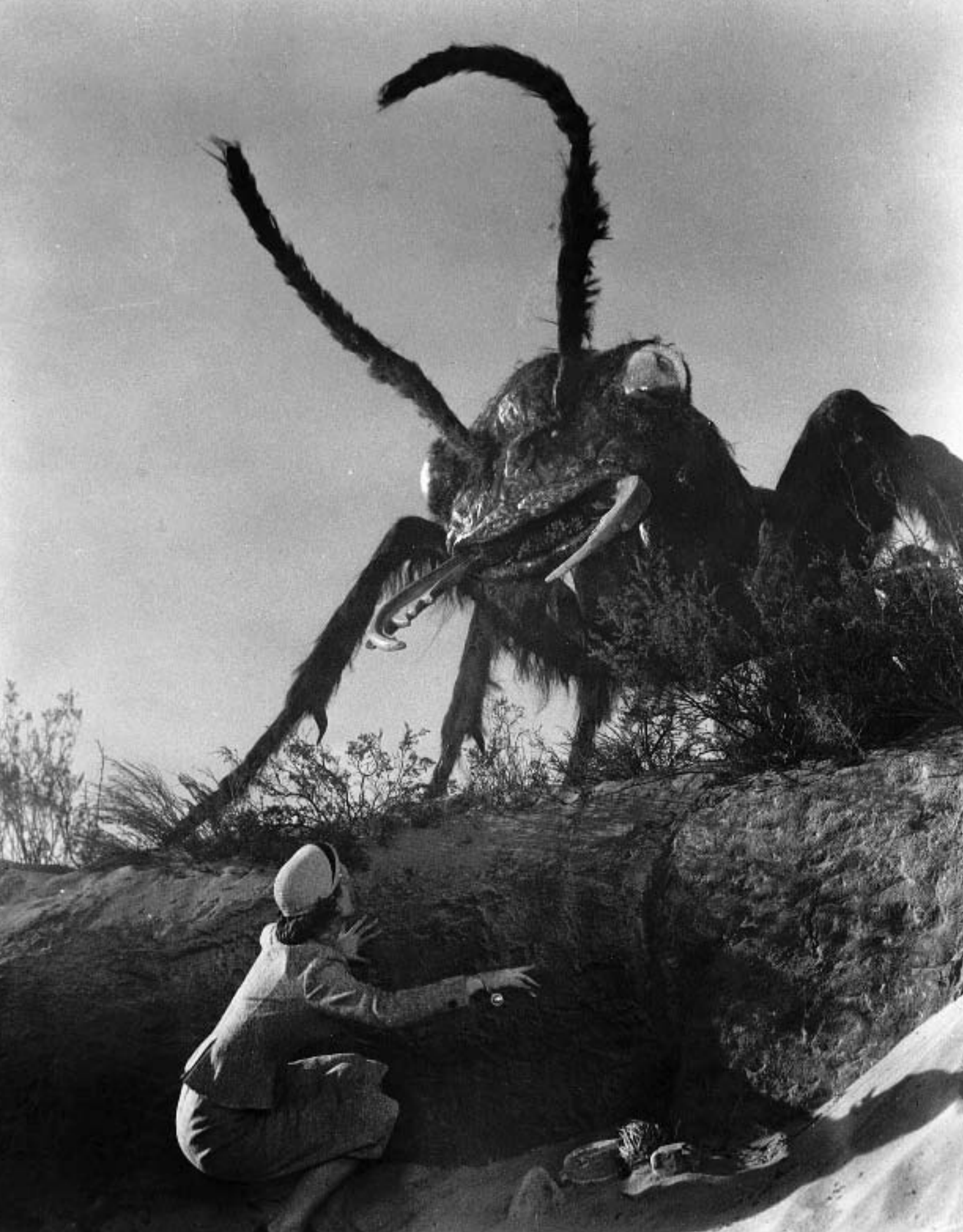
Science-fiction purists argue that the monster films of the 1950s were less science fiction than horror, but the line between the two categories is sometimes difficult to draw. The films of the Universal horror cycle of the 1930s (*Dracula, Frankenstein*, etc.) and the imaginative widescreen color remakes of them produced by England's Hammer Films in the late 1950s and the 1960s, for example, are clearly distinguishable in iconography and theme from science-fiction classics such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Forbidden Planet*. Here, science fiction seems to be concerned with the catastrophic impact of technology on civilization—an impact that means the end of evolution—while horror focuses on the potential evil within the human heart. Yet monster films pose the specifically modern (that is, postwar) problem of how human evil and technology *combine* to threaten the existence of the race, and therefore, they seem to straddle the generic fence between science fiction and horror.



When Worlds Collide (Rudolph Maté, 1951): Academy frame (originally 1.33:1).

Some of the early monster films were carefully produced by the majors, such as RKO's *The Thing*, Warner Bros.' *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (Eugene Lourie, 1953; effects by Harryhausen), and the same studio's *Them!* (Gordon Douglas, 1954).

Other monster films of the 1950s—for example, Columbia's *It Came from beneath the Sea* (Robert Gordon, 1955) and *20 Million Miles to Earth* (Nathan Juran, 1957), both with effects by Harryhausen—relied heavily on their special effects. Yet by mid-decade, monster films had largely become the province of exploitation producers. Most of the American low-budget science-fiction quickies of the 1950s were made by Allied Artists (AA) or American International Pictures (AIP), the successors to the B-film studios of the 1930s and the 1940s. AA was in fact a reincarnation of Monogram Productions, which had changed its corporate name in 1952. The studio struggled through much of the 1950s and the 1960s, producing a handful of good science-fiction entries but surviving mainly on cheapies, such as *Attack of the Crab Monsters*



(Roger Corman, 1957) and *Not of This Earth* (Roger Corman, 1957).

The ultimate exploitation producer of the era, however, was AIP, founded by James H. Nicholson and Samuel Z. Arkoff as American Releasing Corporation (ARC) in 1954, with working capital of $3,000. Nicholson and Arkoff were able to build an empire from these humble beginnings by tapping into a market that mainstream producers were ignoring—the children of the baby boom and their teenage precursors. With the exception of late afternoons and Saturday mornings, television programming of the 1950s was targeted at adults, and so was Hollywood's widescreen Eastmancolor counter-programming. The majors welcomed box-office spillover from the kids and were always happy to have produced a family hit, but only Disney among them was actually producing films *for* children, and for younger ones, parents in tow, at that. Yet AIP discovered a market of kids alone, kids who were ready to pay good money for the cheapest kind of audiovisual thrills, as long as their cultural values weren't offended.

During the 1950s, AIP produced its share of bargain-basement Westerns, crime thrillers, and teenage exposés, but its real profit center was the monster film, the more sensational and lurid the better. As had its B-studio predecessors, AIP initially rented its features to exhibitors at a flat rate, which meant that they usually wound up at the bottom half of double bills, but by 1956 Nicholson and Arkoff had arrived at the successful formula of packaging their films as already-paired double bills, which enabled them both to better control the market and to double their rentals.

The idea was so successful that other exploitation producers copied it, with the result that nearly all of the low-budget films described in this section were seen by their original audiences as parts of a two-film program, yoked with their mates through dual promotion and publicity. AIP was set up as a constellation of five independent producers, among whom were the producer-directors Bert I. Gordon (b. 1922) and Roger Corman (b. 1926). Gordon, who sometimes wrote his own scripts, specialized in low-budget special effects that he produced himself through extensive use of rear-screen projection and mattes, often quite successfully. His insect-mutation film (giant grasshoppers) *Beginning of the End* (1957) was distributed by Republic, but his next five films—*The Cyclops* (1957); *The Amazing Colossal Man* (1957); its sequel, *War of the Colossal Beast* (1958); *Attack of the Puppet People* (1958); and *The Spider* (1958)—were all big money makers for AIP.

Corman, a much more important figure, initially specialized in monster/horror quickies, some of which were reputedly shot in fewer than three days. Yet he also produced the much-admired black-humor trilogy *A Bucket of Blood* (1959), *The Little Shop of Horrors* (1960), and *Creature from the Haunted Sea* (1961), the latter two for his own company, Filmgroup. When AIP decided to make its films in CinemaScope and color, Corman was given the first such assignment, *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1960), adapted from Edgar Allan Poe by novelist Richard Matheson and budgeted at a princely $350,000. This film was both a critical and a commercial success, becoming the first AIP release since 1956 to play by itself (in most theaters), and the first ever to rent on a percentage basis in the manner of a standard mainstream feature.

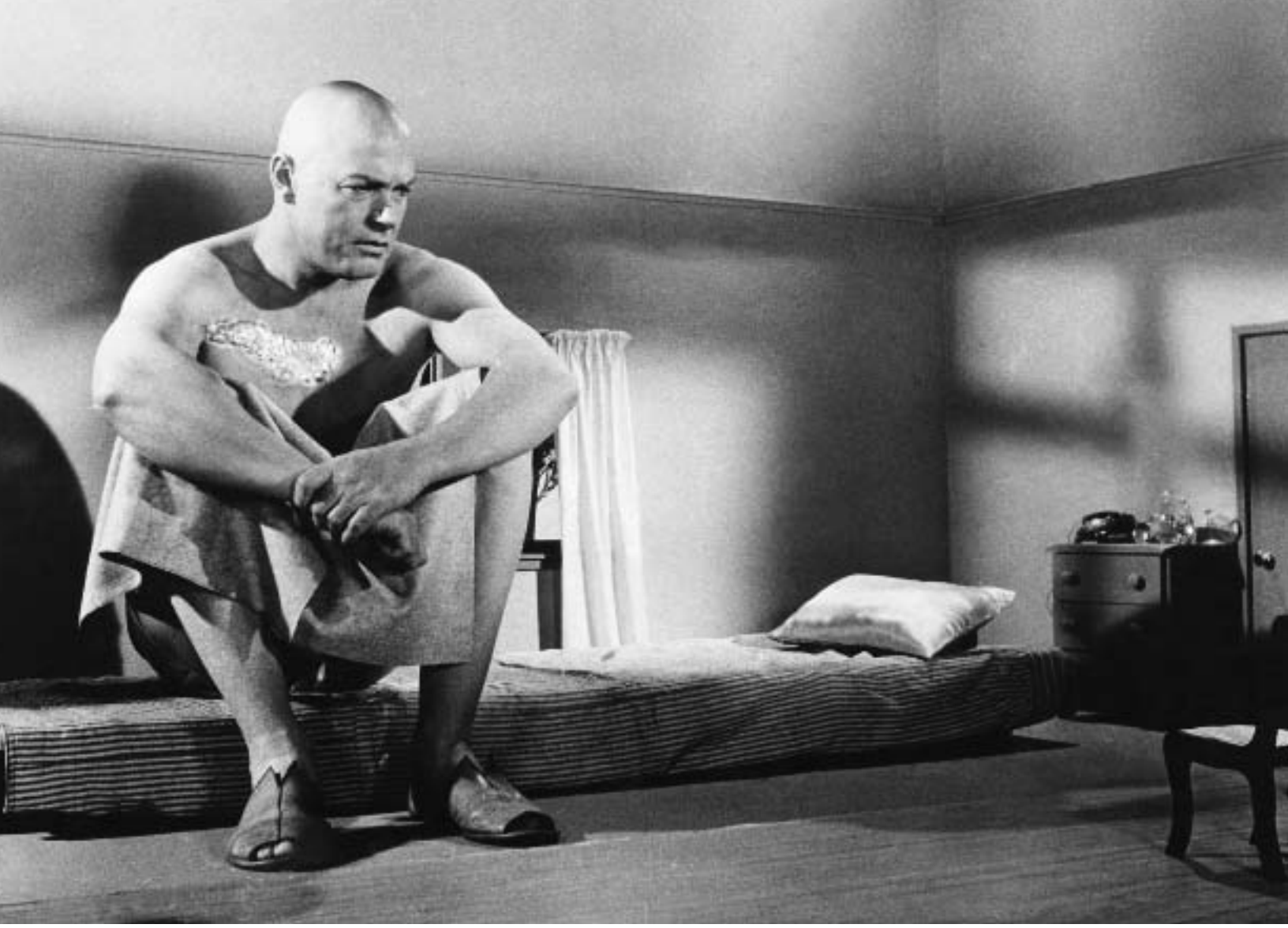
It was followed by a series of increasingly successful Poe films, scripted by some combination of Matheson, Charles Beaumont, and Robert Towne, and produced and directed by Corman: *The Pit and the Pendulum* (1961), *The Premature Burial* (1962), *Tales of Terror* (1962), *The Raven* (1963), *The Haunted Palace* (1963; "inspired" by Poe's poem but actually adapted from an H. P. Lovecraft story), *The Masque of the Red Death* (1964), and *The Tomb of Ligeia* (1965).

In the 1960s and the early 1970s, science fiction, too, became more mainstream, if frequently less exciting. The fact that science fiction had become a fully respectable genre by the mid-1960s was demonstrated by the number of serious filmmakers who had begun to work in it. These included Joseph Losey (*The Damned/These Are the Damned* [1961]), Jean-Luc Godard (*Alphaville* [1965]), François Truffaut (*Fahrenheit 451* [1966]), Elio Petri (*The Tenth Victim* [1965]), Alain Resnais (*Je t'aime, je t'aime* [1968]), and of course, Stanley Kubrick, who apotheosized the science-fiction film in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, with its multimillion-dollar special effects by Douglas Trumbull and its deeply metaphysical theme.

(left) Joan Weldon as a beleagured entomologist in *Them!* (Gordon Douglas, 1954): Academy frame (originally 1.33:1; matted to 1.75:1 in projection).

The "Small Film": American *Kammerspielfilm*

The final generic development of the American 1950s was the brief appearance of the "small film," a low-budget black-and-white film shot in the Academy frame format with television techniques and concerned with



Glenn Langan in *The Amazing Colossal Man* (Bert I. Gordon, 1957): Academy frame (originally 1.33:1).

the everyday lives of ordinary people. Clearly influenced by Italian neorealism, these films were independently produced, shot largely on location, and usually adapted from original teleplays for live drama by writers such as Rod Serling, Paddy Chayefsky, and Reginald Rose.

The first small film was *Marty* (Delbert Mann, 1955), based on a downbeat Chayefsky teleplay about the life of a shy, unattractive butcher in New York City. It was produced by the independent Hecht-Lancaster organization and was an unprecedented critical success, winning both the Grand Prix at Cannes and the American Academy Award for Best Actor (to Ernest Borgnine) in the year of its release. *Marty* was also a great commercial success, and this encouraged the production of other small films adapted from teleplays.

Rod Serling's tense drama about the viciousness of corporate power struggles, *Patterns of Power*, was adapted by Fielder Cook as *Patterns* (1956), while Hecht–Lancaster attempted to repeat the success of *Marty* in *The Bachelor Party* (1957), written by Chayefsky and directed by Delbert Mann. Rose's *12 Angry Men* (Sidney Lumet, 1957), Serling's *Requiem for a Heavyweight* (Ralph Nelson, 1962), and Chayefsky's *The Catered Affair* (Richard Brooks, 1956) and *Middle of the Night* (Delbert Mann, 1959) were all adapted for the screen as "small films," but as live drama began to disappear from television in the late 1950s, to be replaced by weekly filmed series, the small-film movement vanished, too.

The barrier between cinema and television had been broken by the small film, however, and the relationship was to remain an open one, so that ultimately the two media learned to co-exist and even to subsist on one another. By the late 1950s, for instance, the major



Ernest Borgnine in *Marty* (Delbert Mann, 1955): Academy frame (originally 1.33:1; matted to 1.85:1 in projection).

studios were devoting a substantial percentage of their production facilities to filming weekly television series modeled on the B-pictures of the 1930s and the 1940s. And by the mid-1960s, some of the American cinema's most important new directors—John Frankenheimer, Irvin Kershner, Sidney Lumet, and Sam Peckinpah, to name a few—had begun their careers in studio television production.

Independent Production and the Decline of the Studio System

As this account of the small film suggests, independent production outside of the studio was on the rise in the 1950s. Four of the decade's most brilliant American films—*Kiss Me Deadly* (Robert Aldrich, 1955; Parklane Productions), *The Night of the Hunter* (Charles Laughton, 1955; Paul Gregory Productions—the actor's only film as a director), *Sweet Smell of Success* (Alexander Mackendrick, 1957; Hecht-Hill-Lancaster), and *Paths of Glory* (Stanley Kubrick, 1957; Harris-Kubrick Productions)—were independently produced, all of them for United Artists release, as were seven of the films given the Academy Award for Best Picture between 1954 and 1962. Stanley Kramer started his independent production activities as early as 1948, producing *Home of the Brave* (Mark Robson, 1949), *Champion* (Mark Robson, 1949), *The Men* (Fred Zinnemann, 1950), and *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann, 1952) on modest budgets in rapid succession. While Kramer's status as a director is equivocal, his production record is distinguished; it also includes a film version of Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman* (Laslo Benedek, 1952), *The Member of the Wedding* (Fred Zinnemann, 1952), and *The Wild One* (Laslo Benedek, 1953).

United Artists, which distributed most of Kramer's films, found that its liabilities of the 1930s and the 1940s became assets during the 1950s and the 1960s. Having no expensive production facilities to maintain in an era of ever-increasing location shooting and no theater circuits to lose to the consent decrees, United Artists had become the most important independent producer in Hollywood by 1956. In this capacity, it distributed some of the era's landmark films. The Hecht-Lancaster Company (Hecht-Hill-Lancaster after 1956), organized in 1947 by producer Harold Hecht and actor Burt Lancaster, was another successful independent. From the early 1950s, it specialized in sophisticated action films starring Lancaster, such as *Vera Cruz* (Robert Aldrich, 1954) and *The Kentuckian* (Burt Lancaster, 1955), although it also produced a number of important "small films."

Other notable independent production companies born in the 1950s, all of which released through United Artists, were the Walter Mirisch Corporation, Seven-Arts, and actor Kirk Douglas's Bryna Productions. By 1958, in fact, 65 percent of Hollywood's motion pictures were made by independents, as the focus of production shifted away from the studios to the production unit itself.

No account of independent production in the 1950s would be complete without mentioning two distinct phenomena at the high and low ends of the exploitation scale. As the search for new formats in the war with television intensified in 1959–1960, several filmmakers introduced Aroma-Rama and Smell-O-Vision, systems designed to let theater audiences smell what they saw on screen. Aroma-Rama pumped its scents through a theater's existing air-conditioning system and removed them (not entirely successfully) with electronic air filters. Smell-O-Vision (also known as Scentovision) used individual atomizers strategically positioned between the rows of seats. Only one feature was made with each process—Aroma-Rama's *Behind the Great Wall*, a documentary on China that premiered at the Mayfair Theater in New York City on December 2, 1959, and Smell-O-Vision's *Scent of Mystery*, produced by Mike Todd Jr. and premiered at the Cinestage Theater in Chicago on January 12, 1960 (the latter was re-released, odorless, the same year as *Holiday in Spain*). Like 3-D earlier in



Gary Cooper in *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann, 1952): Academy frame (originally 1.33:1).

the decade, neither system survived its novelty period, although, when working properly, both could create an impressive olfactory illusion.

The old studio production system remained in operation during the 1950s but continued to crumble under the combined threats of political pressure, television, rising independent production, and perhaps most serious, loss of the exhibition chains. By mid-decade, steadily increasing monetary inflation could be added to this catalogue of woes, and all of these forces spelled the beginning of the end for Hollywood as it had been structured since the 1920s. From the peak year of 1946, when American theaters had averaged nearly 100 million admissions per week, film attendance dropped to 46 million in 1955. Production fell from nearly 500 features per year during the 1930s to 383 in 1950, to 254 in 1955.

Decca Records absorbed Universal Pictures in 1952 and was absorbed in turn by the huge entertainment conglomerate MCA between 1959 and 1962. RKO ceased production entirely in 1957 (although the famous name survives in RKO General, the broadcast ownership division of the General Tire and Rubber Company).

American film production and audience attendance both continued to decline while production costs soared, until, by 1966, 30 percent of all films made in the United States were independently produced, and 50 percent of all American films were "runaway" productions—that is, films shot on location in foreign

countries (usually Italy, Yugoslavia, or Spain) to economize on sets and labor (nonunion and therefore cheaper). In other words, by the mid-1960s, 80 percent of all American films were made outside the once ironclad studio system.

Moreover, as discussed in the next chapters, foreign film industries had recovered from the war by the late 1950s and for the first time were offering Hollywood vigorous commercial competition. Stiff postwar import duties on nondomestic productions had severely restricted Hollywood's most profitable European markets—especially, England, Italy, and France—while American demand for foreign films had been growing steadily since the divestiture order of 1948 first permitted U.S. exhibitors to show what they chose, rather than what the studios had chosen for them. In fact, between 1958 and 1968, the number of foreign films in distribution in the United States would actually exceed the number of domestic productions, often by a ratio of two (and sometimes three) to one.

As the studio system declined during the 1950s, so too did the star system with which it had been intimately linked for more than thirty years. As studios were forced to cut back on production, due to the inroads of television, inflation, and other blights, expensive promotional campaigns were abandoned, and star contracts went from long term to short term and finally to simple profit-sharing options on individual films. This practice began as early as 1949, when *Variety* reported that Warner Bros. and Paramount had negotiated profit-sharing deals for as high as 33 percent with John Garfield, Danny Kaye, Milton Berle, Bob Hope, and Bing Crosby.

Yet the historic catalyst for the shift occurred in 1950, when Lew Wasserman of MCA negotiated a 50 percent share of Universal's *Winchester '73* for Jimmy Stewart, earning him $600,000 when the film became a popular success. Obviously, deals such as these made the stars increasingly independent of the studios, and some—for example, Burt Lancaster and Kirk Douglas—even formed their own production companies. There were American stars in the 1950s to be sure, and many whose careers had begun under the studio system—among them, Burt Lancaster, Kirk Douglas, James Stewart, Cary Grant, Henry Fonda, John Wayne, Rock Hudson, Tony Curtis, Charlton Heston, Montgomery Clift, Robert Mitchum, William Holden, Frank Sinatra, Yul Brynner, Glenn Ford, Gregory Peck, Gary Cooper, Ava Gardner, Jean Simmons, Grace Kelly, Audrey Hepburn, Susan Hayward, Gina Lollobrigida, Sophia Loren, Deborah Kerr, Debbie Reynolds, Elizabeth Taylor, Kim Novak, Doris Day, and quintessentially, Marilyn Monroe, Marlon Brando, and James Dean. Yet they worked more independently of the system than had earlier stars, and to quote Alexander Walker, the 1950s in general were the transitional period "from studios who owned stars to stars who owned pictures."

The Scrapping of the Production Code

A final important development of the 1950s in America was the breaking of the Production Code and the achievement of an unprecedented freedom of expression for the cinema. Ever since a U.S. Supreme Court decision of 1915 (*Mutual v. Ohio*), the movies had not been considered a part of the press, whose freedom is guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution. For this reason, six states and hundreds of local communities had film censorship boards, and of course, through the Production Code, Hollywood had imposed an extreme form of censorship on itself. Yet this situation changed in 1952, after the State of New York attempted to prevent the exhibition of the Italian film *Il miracolo* (*The Miracle* [Roberto Rossellini, 1948]; written by Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, and Rossellini himself), on the grounds that it committed "sacrilege." Producer-distributor Joseph Burstyn took the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in May 1952 that movies were "a significant medium for communication of ideas" and were therefore protected against the charge of sacrilege by both the First and the Fourteenth Amendments. Subsequent court rulings between 1952 and 1958 clarified the *Miracle* decision, and by the early 1960s, films were guaranteed full freedom of expression.

While these legal battles were in progress, the Production Code was being challenged from within by the influx of "unapproved" foreign films and, especially, by the rise of independent production. Because the studios no longer owned America's theaters, they could no longer force the exhibitors to accept their product exclusively. Shrewdly realizing this, director Otto Preminger openly challenged the code by producing two films for United Artists with sensational (for that era) content—*The Moon Is Blue* (1953), which used the forbidden word *virgin*, and *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), in which Frank Sinatra portrayed a heroin addict. As Preminger had anticipated, both films were denied the Production Code's Seal of Approval, and



Eli Wallach and Carroll Baker in *Baby Doll* (Elia Kazan, 1956): Academy frame (originally 1.33:1).

both were released independently to great commercial success.

It didn't take long for the studios to find out which way the wind was blowing: Elia Kazan's *Baby Doll*, released by Warner Bros. in 1956 to a storm of protest, was the first motion picture of a major American studio ever to be publicly condemned by the Legion of Decency, the Catholic organization responsible for instituting the Production Code in the first place. The financial success of these three films sounded the death knell for the legion's influence in Hollywood, and the Production Code was scrapped altogether in the 1960s, in favor of a **ratings** system administered by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), which does not proscribe the content of films, but rather classifies them as appropriate for certain segments of the public, according to age.

Instituted in 1968 and revised in 1972 and 1984, the MPAA ratings system uses the following five classifications for films: G (general audience); PG (parental guidance suggested for children under seventeen); PG-13 (parental guidance suggested for children under thirteen); R (restricted to persons seventeen or older, unless accompanied by an adult); and NC-17 (no children under seventeen admitted; formerly X). Many people believe that the ratings system has contributed significantly to the decline of high-quality films in the G and PG range and to the sharp increase in exploitative sex and violence in the R and NC-17 classifications.

In about 1955, human sexuality began to be overtly depicted on the American screen for the first time since the code's imposition some twenty years earlier, and more generally, a fascination with veiled (and increasingly unveiled) eroticism came to pervade American films in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. This, more than any other single factor, accounts for the vast popularity of the *Pillow Talk* cycle, seven adaptations from the exotic plays of Tennessee Williams,

and such sexy imports as *And God Created Woman* (*Et Dieu créa la femme*; Roger Vadim, 1956) and *La dolce vita* (Federico Fellini, 1960) during this period.

Other taboos were broken, too, as a new realism of content entered American cinema after years of political reaction. Social problems such as juvenile delinquency (*Rebel without a Cause* [1955], *Blackboard Jungle* [1955]), alcoholism, drug addiction, and even race were suddenly fair game for filmmakers working both inside and outside the studios. Crime began to be treated less moralistically and melodramatically, so that it became possible by the end of the decade to sympathize with criminals as human beings, although they did not become wholly admirable ones until Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967).

The next cultural taboo that American cinema had to overcome (simultaneously with Italy and preceded slightly by Japan) was the convention against the graphic, excessive, and/or poetic depiction of brutality and violence. This, however, could not occur until the 1963 assassination of President Kennedy (which was documented on film by Abraham Zapruder), the gunning down on live television of Lee Harvey Oswald, and for much of the decade that followed, the nightly TV news updates that brought the war in Vietnam into American living rooms.



Kyôko Kosaka, László Szabó, and Anna Karina in *Made in U.S.A.* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1966).



13

The French New Wave, or *Nouvelle Vague*, and Its Native Context

The Occupation and Postwar Cinema

During the German Occupation of France, from 1940 to 1944—when Feyder, Renoir, Duvivier, and Clair were all in exile—a new generation of French directors emerged, most of whom had worked as scriptwriters or assistants under the leading figures of poetic realism in the 1930s.

Claude Autant-Lara (1901–2000), who had worked as a designer for Marcel L'Herbier and as an assistant to Clair, directed a number of sophisticated period films during the Occupation, but his critical reputation rests most firmly on a series of stylish literary adaptations written by Jean Aurenche (1904–1992) and Pierre Bost (1901–1975) that he made in the postwar era—especially *Le diable au corps* (*The Devil in the Flesh*, 1947) and *L'auberge rouge* (*The Red Inn*, 1951). Writing as a team, Aurenche and Bost became specialists in tightly scripted films; they also worked closely with the director René Clément (1913–1996), whose first film had been a neorealistic account of the activities of the French Resistance, *La bataille du rail* (*The Battle of the Rails*, 1946).



Clément also co-directed *La belle et la bête* (*Beauty and the Beast*, 1946) with playwright Jean Cocteau and made the suspenseful anti-Nazi thriller *Les maudits* (*The Damned*, 1947). Yet his two greatest films of the postwar era, both written by Aurenche and Bost, were the poetic antiwar drama *Jeux interdits* (*Forbidden Games*, 1952) and a strikingly evocative adaptation of Zola's *L'assommoir*, titled *Gervaise* (1956). These films won multiple international awards, as did Clément's comic masterpiece *Monsieur Ripois* (*The Knave of Hearts*), shot in England in 1954. Afterward, Clément turned to big-budget international co-productions, most of them distinctly mediocre.

Jean Grémillon (1902–1959), who had made important films in the silent era, produced his greatest work during the Occupation—*Lumière d'été* (1943), a Renoiresque portrait of the decadent French ruling classes, written by Jacques Prévert; and *Le ciel est à vous* (English title: *The Woman Who Dared*, 1944), a beautiful film about a provincial woman who breaks the world record for long-distance flying with the help of her husband and the people of her town. After the war, Grémillon turned to the documentary but continued to exercise great influence on French cinema as president of the Cinémathèque Française.

Jean Cocteau (1889–1963), who had confined himself to writing scripts during the Occupation, returned to filmmaking in the postwar years. Perhaps more than any other figure, he incarnated the literary tendency of French cinema during this period. In 1946, he wrote and co-directed (with Clément) an enchantingly beautiful version of the Flemish fairy tale *La belle et la bête* (*Beauty and the Beast*) in a visual style based on the paintings of Vermeer; it stands today as perhaps the greatest example of the cinema of the fantastic in the history of film. With *Orphée* (1950), a modern version of the Orpheus legend, Cocteau returned to the surreal, psychomythic regions of *Le sang d'un poète* (*Blood of a Poet*, 1930) to create his most brilliant film. He adapted his play *Les enfants terribles* (*The Terrible Children*, directed by Jean-Pierre Melville) for the screen in 1950 and gave the cinema his final artistic statement in *Le testament d'Orphée* (*The Testament of Orpheus*, 1959), a surrealistic fable that is replete with personal symbols and that attempts to suggest the relationships among poetry, myth, death, and the unconscious.

(left) Jean Marais and Josette Day in *La belle et la bête* (*Beauty and the Beast*; Jean Cocteau, 1946).

Jacques Becker (1906–1960) is another figure who emerged during the Occupation and came to prominence in the postwar years. As assistant to Renoir from 1931 to 1939, Becker tended to direct films that cut across the traditional class barriers of French society. Yet Becker's masterpiece is unquestionably *Casque d'or* (*Golden Helmet/Golden Marie*, 1952), a visually sumptuous tale of doomed love set in turn-of-the-century Paris and written by Becker himself. Cast in the form of a period gangster film and based on historical fact, *Casque d'or* is a work of great formal beauty whose visual texture evokes the films of Feuillade and engravings from La Belle Époque. *Touchez pas au grisbi* (English title: *Honor among Thieves*, 1954), adapted from an Albert Simonin novel, is a sophisticated tale of rivalry between contemporary Montmartre gangs; it started the vogue for gangster films and thrillers that typified French cinema in the late 1950s, for instance, Jules Dassin's *Rififi* (1955). After making three commissioned films of uneven quality, Becker directed, shortly before his death in 1960, his final masterpiece, *Le trou* (*The Hole/The Night Watch*, 1960)—a restrained exploration of loyalty, freedom, and human dignity, set entirely in a prison cell where five men plot an ill-fated escape.

Another important director whose career began during the Occupation was Henri-Georges Clouzot (1907–1977), a former scriptwriter for E. A. Dupont and Anatole Litvak at UFA. Clouzot's first feature was unremarkable, but his second, *Le corbeau* (*The Raven*, 1943), established him as the chief progenitor of French film noir. This darkly pessimistic tale of a town destroyed by poison-pen letters is a masterpiece of psychological suspense, but because it was produced by the Nazi-owned Continental Corporation and seemed to be anti-French (although it was actually simply misanthropic), both Clouzot and his co-scenarist, Louis Chavance (1907–1979), were accused of collaboration and briefly suspended from the French film industry after the Liberation. In fact, Clouzot was apolitical, but his films typically dealt with the brutal, the sordid, and the neurotic, and his entire career was marked by an aura of scandal.

With *Le salaire de la peur* (*The Wages of Fear*, 1953), he created a masterpiece of unrelenting alienation in a film about a group of down-and-out expatriates trapped in a miserable South American town who are driven by despair and greed to undertake the suicidal mission of hauling a truckload of nitroglycerine through a dense jungle for an American oil company. Always a meticulous and professional craftsman in the French studio tradition, Clouzot became increasingly erratic as the 1950s progressed. The film that confirmed his



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[1] Simone Signoret in *Casque d'or* (*Golden Helmet/Golden Marie*; Jacques Becker, 1952). [2] Charles Vanel and Yves Montand in *Le salaire de la peur* (*The Wages of Fear*; Henri-George Clouzot, 1953).

international reputation, *Les diaboliques* (*Diabolique*, 1955), is a brilliantly manipulative exercise in horrific suspense involving a complicated murder plot in a boarding school. Like Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, it was adapted from a novel by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac.

Robert Bresson and Jacques Tati

Except for film noir, the prevailing mode of postwar French cinema was literary adaptation, which caused French films to become increasingly verbal and theatrical. It was against this tendency—identified as "the tradition of quality" ("*la tradition de la qualité*") by François Truffaut and the other critics writing in *Cahiers du cinéma*—that the New Wave reacted in the late 1950s and the 1960s. In fact, the war had not produced a break with cinematic traditions in France, as it had in Italy and other European nations, except for the innovative work of Robert Bresson and Jacques Tati.

Robert Bresson (1907–1999), a former scriptwriter, was the more important of the two. His two Occupation films—*Les anges du péché* (*The Angels of Sin*, 1943), written with the playwright Jean Giraudoux, and *Les dames du bois de Boulogne* (*The Ladies of the Bois de Boulogne*, 1945), freely adapted by Bresson and Jean Cocteau from a story by the eighteenth-century writer Denis Diderot—established Bresson as a serious and disciplined artist within the "scenarist," or literary, tradition of French cinema. Yet in *Le journal d'un curé de campagne* (*Diary of a Country Priest*, 1951), Bresson displayed a highly personalized style whose psychological realism is predicated on an absolute austerity of acting, dialogue, and mise-en-scène.

All of Bresson's later films display this austerity and precision of style, which has led some critics to call him a classicist, although he preferred to be thought of as a realist practicing close to the borderline of abstraction. His masterpiece, *Un condamné à mort s'est échappé* (*A Man Escaped*, 1956), concerns the arrest, escape, and recapture of a young Resistance fighter during the Occupation, and it takes place almost entirely in the condemned man's cell. Most of Bresson's subsequent films—for example, *Pickpocket* (1959), *Le procès de Jeanne d'Arc* (*The Trial of Joan of Arc*, 1961), *Au hasard Balthasar* (1966), and *Mouchette* (1967)—were derived from literary sources and dealt with humanist themes.

Jacques Tati (b. Jacques Tatischeff, 1908–1982), a former music-hall entertainer and pantomimist, became one of international cinema's great comic talents in the postwar era, rivaling such masters of the silent film as Max Linder, Charlie Chaplin, and Buster Keaton. In his first feature, *Jour de fête* (*Big Day/The Village Fair*, 1949), which took him several years to complete, Tati plays a French postman who is persuaded by a documentary into employing sophisticated American postal-service technology in his small village, with disastrous results. As in all of Tati's films, the humor, which is largely visual, is achieved through scrupulous planning and brilliant mime. In *Les vacances de M. Hulot* (*Mr. Hulot's Holiday*, 1953), Tati created a new comic character, Mr. Hulot, a vague, wacky, middle-class Frenchman who goes to spend his holiday at a seaside resort in Brittany. Hulot's misadventures there are represented to us as a series of meticulously worked-out sight gags, in which things simply "happen" to the character with no particular logic or cause.

With *Mon oncle* (*My Uncle*, 1958), his first film in color, Tati turned to the more serious vein of satire. Here, Hulot's traditional and somewhat archaic lifestyle in an old quarter of Paris is contrasted with the antiseptic and mechanistic environment of his brother-in-law, Arpel, who lives in an ultramodern house in the city's new suburban wasteland and works as an executive in a plastics factory. The humanistic impact of the satire is not unlike that of René Clair's *À nous la liberté* (1931) or Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936), although its appeal is totally unsentimental.

Tati's next film, *Playtime* (1967), took him three years to complete and was shot in color and 70mm Panavision with five-track stereophonic sound. Using



Alain Bécourt and Jacques Tati in *Mon oncle* (*My Uncle*; Jacques Tati, 1958).



(left) Claude Laydu and Nicole Ladmiral in *Le journal d'un curé de campagne* (*Diary of a Country Priest*; Robert Bresson, 1951).

the full resources of the widescreen format to create spectator involvement, Tati offers in *Playtime* a series of quietly humorous vignettes about a group of American tourists who come to see the "real" Paris and end up experiencing a space-age city of steel, glass, chrome, and plastic. Widely regarded today as a modernist masterpiece, it is a film not of belly laughs, but of sustained, intelligent humor, and it clearly represents Tati's finest achievement. Yet *Playtime* was a multimillion-dollar commercial failure, and because he had financed it himself, the director was nearly bankrupted by it. To recoup his losses, Tati made *Trafic* (*Traffic*, 1971), a minor Hulot film that comments on the auto mania of modern industrial society. A painstaking craftsman who planned every detail of his films far in advance of production, Tati made only five features in his entire career. Nevertheless, he was a master cinematic humorist, whose concept of comedy was almost purely visual, and he deserves to be ranked with the greatest of the silent comedians for the breadth of his humanity and the restrained brilliance of his comic achievement.

Max Ophüls

Another major figure working in French cinema in the 1950s, and one who had a profound influence on the New Wave generation that succeeded him, was Max Ophüls (b. Max Oppenheimer, 1902–1957). Ophüls was a German Jew who had directed films for UFA between 1930 and Hitler's rise to power in 1933. For the next seven years, he made films in Italy, the Netherlands, and France, where he ultimately became a citizen in 1938. Ophüls was forced to flee to Hollywood when France fell to the Nazis in 1940, and after four years of anonymity, he was finally able to make a series of stylish melodramas for Paramount: *The Exile* (1947), *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948), *Caught* (1949), and *The Reckless Moment* (1949), which are among his very best films. Returning to France in 1949, Ophüls entered the period of his greatest creativity, making four elegant, masterful films in succession between 1950 and 1955—*La ronde*, *Le plaisir*, *Madame de . . .* , and *Lola Montès*. Ophüls had always worked within the studio system, so the subject matter of his films, often light and operettalike, was never as important to him as visual style. And it is for their dazzling mise-en-scène that Ophüls's last four films, all photographed by the great French cameraman Christian Matras (1903–1977), are most remarkable.

La ronde (1950) is an adaptation of an Arthur Schnitzler play set in turn-of-the-century Vienna. Its ten separate episodes posit that love is a perpetual roundabout, in which one partner is regularly exchanged for another until the pattern comes full circle, like the movements of a waltz, only to begin again. This unbroken circle of affairs is presided over by a master of ceremonies who manipulates and comments on the behavior of the characters, becoming a surrogate for Ophüls himself. *Le plaisir* (English title: *House of Pleasure*, 1952) is derived from three Maupassant stories, linked by a narrator; they illustrate the theme that pleasure may be easy to come by, but happiness is not. Like all of Ophüls's work, the film is marked by meticulous attention to period detail and by an incessantly moving camera. In one famous sequence, the camera circles the exterior of a brothel time and time again, never entering the set but peering voyeuristically through windows at significant dramatic actions taking place within.

In *Madame de . . .* (English title: *The Earrings of Madame de . . .* , 1953), also set at the turn of the century, Ophüls constructs yet another circular narrative that rotates around a central axis of vanity, frivolity, and lust. Here, the passage of a pair of earrings from a husband to his wife to the husband's mistress to the wife's lover and finally back to the husband again constitutes a single perfect revolution in the roundabout of infidelity. The characters are ultimately shallow because everything in *Madame de . . .* is subordinate to its aesthetic design. As if to mirror the movement of the waltzes on the sound track, the camera whirls and pirouettes continuously to follow the film's principals through its glittering period decor, suggesting that life is itself a kind of waltz in which all of us are caught up while the music plays.

Lola Montès (1955) is generally considered to be Ophüls's masterpiece, the consummation of his life's work. Conceived by its producers as a big-budget superspectacle in Eastmancolor and CinemaScope with an international cast of stars, it was based on the scandalous life of a mediocre nineteenth-century dancer who became the mistress of the composer Franz Liszt and, during the revolutions of 1848, of Ludwig I, deposed king of Bavaria. She finally ended as a circus performer, selling kisses to earn her keep. Ophüls cared nothing for the subject, remarking of Lola herself, "Her role is roughly the same as that of our pair of earrings in *Madame de. . . .*" That is, he merely used her





Martine Carol (center) in *Lola Montès* (Max Ophüls, 1955).

story to create a dazzling exercise in visual style. This was one of the most intricate, opulent, and elaborate films to appear on the French screen since Abel Gance's *Napoléon* (1927).

Ironically, Ophüls was initially opposed to the use of CinemaScope, but his sense of visual patterning was such that he turned *Lola Montès* into a stunning exhibition of composition for the widescreen frame. He frequently broke the horizontal space of the screen with vertical dominants and framed shots through arches, columns, and drapery. He learned to compose close-ups by balancing both sides of the frame, and at other times—as during the circus scenes—he would fill the entire CinemaScope frame with significant dramatic action. The film begins and ends within the circus tent, where the ringmaster introduces Lola's act by recalling the circumstances of her past life, which is then represented on the screen in a series of a chronological flashbacks. Ophüls uses color nonnaturalistically throughout the film, especially in these flashback sequences, where each is tinted according to its prevailing emotional tone. Finally, the camera seems never to stop its circular tracking around some invisible axis, in or out of the tent, making the circularity of things seen on the screen a metaphor for life itself. As critic Andrew Sarris has remarked, "With Ophüls it is movement itself that is emphasized rather than its terminal points of rest."

The key to Ophüls's style is his mastery of the long take and, especially, of the continuously moving camera. Ophüls was also a genius at composition within the frame, and the influence on him of both German Expressionism and French pictorial impressionism was profound. In his passion for decor and his obsession with the sensuous surfaces of reality, Ophüls most closely resembles Josef von Sternberg. In his cynicism and worldly wit, he is close to Ernst Lubitsch. That his films are devoid of content—a charge frequently leveled against both von Sternberg and Lubitsch—is quite true, if we mean by the term *verbal* or *conceptual* substance. Yet as the New Wave generation was to argue and to demonstrate time and again, the substance of cinema is *audiovisual*, not verbal, and it exists on a level of discourse—similar to that of the circular tracking shots in *Lola Montès*—where perception and conceptualization become one.

(left) Simone Simon in *Le plaisir* (English title: *House of Pleasure*; Max Ophüls, 1952).

Influence of the Fifties Documentary Movement and Independent Production

By 1955, French commercial cinema was approaching stagnation because many filmmakers who had emerged during the Occupation were firmly ensconced within the studio system or working on big-budget spectacles and international co-productions. The cinematic individualism of Bresson and Tati, and also of Cocteau, offered the succeeding generation of French directors examples of how film could be used as a medium of personal expression, and Ophüls had forecast the possibility of a purely audiovisual language for the screen. Yet the most important stylistic influences on this next

generation of filmmakers came from the French documentary movement of the 1950s, which was their training ground, and from the films of independent directors working outside the studio system of production.

The documentary movement can be said to have begun in 1946 with Georges Rouquier's *Farrebique*, a lyrical feature-length documentary about peasant life on a farm spanning the four seasons. Jean Grémillon and Roger Leenhardt both made countless short documentaries during the 1950s on art and on the lives of great men. Yet the master of French documentary cinema during this period was Georges Franju (1912–1987), a totally original filmmaker who was deeply influenced by German Expressionism and has often been called a surrealist.

Franju had been working in cinema since 1937, when he made a 16mm amateur film with Henri Langlois. However, his first major film was *Le sang des bêtes* (*The Blood of the Beasts*, 1949), a brutally graphic documentary short about the daily activity of a slaughterhouse in a quiet Parisian suburb, whose butchery was made deliberately resonant of the horrors of the Nazi death camps. In *Hôtel des invalides*, possibly his finest film, Franju turned an ostensibly objective account of the French War Museum into a devastating antiwar statement by exposing the human suffering that underlies the myths of heroism and glory enshrined by that institution. In 1958, Franju directed his first feature, *La tête contre les murs* (English title: *The Keepers*), a half-documentary, half-surrealistic account of a sane man who is committed to a French lunatic asylum; the film is often cited as a forerunner of the New Wave. Similarly influential is *Les yeux sans visage* (*Eyes without a Face*, 1959; released in the United States cut and dubbed as *The Horror Chamber of Dr. Faustus*), about a mad doctor who kidnaps young girls in a futile effort to graft their faces onto his daughter's disfigured one; it is regarded today as a landmark in modern horror.

Alain Resnais (b. 1922), whose first feature, *Hiroshima, mon amour* (1959), became the clarion call of the New Wave, was another important figure in the French documentary movement. He made documentary shorts for the first eleven years of his career, beginning with a series of films about art—*Van Gogh* (1948), *Gauguin* (1950), *Guernica* (1950)—and progressing to *Nuit et brouillard* (*Night and Fog*, 1955), a profoundly





Jean-Louis Trintignant and Brigitte Bardot in *Et Dieu créa la femme* (*And God Created Woman*; Roger Vadim, 1956).

disturbing meditation on the horrors of the Nazi death camps and on the way time and memory affect our perception of them, written by Jean Cayrol with an original score by Hanns Eisler.

Toute la mémoire du monde (*The Memory of the World*, 1956), a study of the books "imprisoned" in the French National Library, has a similar temporal theme, as do most of Resnais's features. Other figures associated with the documentary short were Chris Marker, who would later organize the radical cooperative La Société pour le Lancement des Oeuvres Nouvelles (SLON) for the production of *Loin du Vietnam* (*Far from Vietnam*, 1967), and the ethnographic filmmaker Jean Rouch, who invented the term *cinéma vérité* by translating Dziga Vertov's *kino-pravda* into French for his *Chronique d'un été* (*Chronicle of a Summer*, 1961; co-produced with Edgar Morin).

The example of independent production outside of the traditional studio system was another important influence on the emergent New Wave generation. Jean-Pierre Melville (b. Jean-Pierre Grumbach, 1917–1973) was a vastly significant figure in this regard. A lover of cinema from an early age, Melville founded his own production company in 1945. His first feature, *Le silence de la mer* (*The Silence of the Sea*, 1947), earned him the admiration of Cocteau, who commissioned him to direct *Les enfants terribles* in 1949. The commercial success of *Quand tu liras cette lettre* (*When You Read This Letter*, 1953) allowed Melville to purchase his own studio and move into totally independent production. The result was the much-admired gangster film *Bob le flambeur* (1955), a highly personalized work whose production methods—location shooting, small crew, use of unknown actors (all borrowed, of course, from neorealism)—became the model for New Wave filmmakers. Melville's work itself became increasingly commercial after he directed *Léon Morin, prêtre* (*Léon Morin, Priest*, 1961), a star vehicle for Jean-Paul Belmondo, but his fascination with the iconography of the American gangster film and the underworld of urban crime caused him to produce a trilogy of popular gangster films in the 1960s that are among the most admired in the genre—*Le doulos* (*The Finger Man*, 1962), *Le deuxième souffle* (*Second Breath*, 1966), and *Le samouraï* (*The Samurai*, 1967).

(left) Shoes of the deported, gassed, and incinerated in *Nuit et brouillard* (*Night and Fog*; Alain Resnais, 1955).

Another independent production that foretold the New Wave—and that some critics have called its first manifestation—is Agnès Varda's *La Pointe-Courte* (1955). This film, about the dissolution and reconstruction of a marriage, is set against the backdrop of a small fishing village and was produced by a collective of crew and actors. It was edited by Alain Resnais and is considered to be a direct antecedent of his own *Hiroshima, mon amour* (1959). The drama of the husband and the wife is highly stylized and "literary," but the day-to-day life of the village is presented in semi-documentary form.

It was the early films of Roger Vadim (1928–2000), however, that contributed most to the economic development of the New Wave. The spectacular commercial success of his independently produced first feature, *Et Dieu créa la femme* (*And God Created Woman*, 1956),

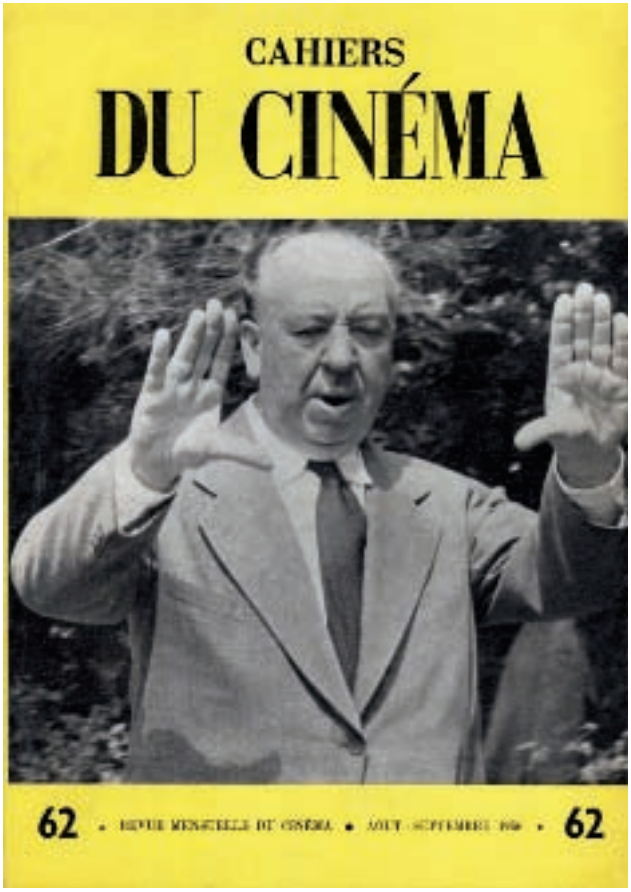
demonstrated to the stagnant French film industry that young directors and new themes could attract large audiences. A visually sumptuous production in widescreen and color, *Et Dieu créa la femme* was a sensitive examination of the vagaries of amoral youth set against the luxurious background of St. Tropez. It starred Vadim's wife, Brigitte Bardot, and featured a number of explicit love scenes, which made it an international hit. In subsequent films, such as *Les liaisons dangereuses* (*Dangerous Liaisons*, 1959), Vadim's commercialism and exploitativeness increased, but he remained an impeccable craftsman and an elegant stylist of the widescreen color film. Moreover, it was Vadim, more than any other single figure in French cinema, who opened the doors of the industry to his generation of filmmakers and provided the economic justification for the New Wave.

Theory: Astruc, Bazin, Auteurism, and *Cahiers du cinéma*

The theoretical justification for the New Wave cinema came from another source: the film critic Alexandre Astruc (b. 1923), who published a highly influential article in *L'écran française* in March 1948 on the concept of the ***caméra-stylo***, which would permit the cinema "to become a means of expression as supple and subtle as that of written language" and would therefore accord filmmakers the status of authors, or *auteurs*. Astruc's notion was to break away from the tyranny of narrative in order to evolve a new form of audiovisual language. He wrote, "The fundamental problem of the cinema is how to express thought. The creation of this language has preoccupied all the theoreticians and writers in the history of cinema, from Eisenstein down to the scriptwriters and adaptors of the sound cinema."

Like Bazin, Astruc questioned the values of classical montage and was an apostle of the long take, as exemplified in the work of Murnau. Astruc was succeeded as a theorist by the vastly influential journal ***Cahiers du cinéma*** (literally, "cinema notebooks"), founded in 1951 by André Bazin (1918–1958) and Jacques Doniol-Valcroze (1920–1989), which gathered about it a group of young critics—François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, Jacques Rivette, and Eric Rohmer—who were to become the leading directors of the **New Wave**. These young men were ***cinéphiles***, or "film lovers." They had grown up in the postwar years watching great American films of the past and present decades (many available for the first time only when the German Occupation ended), as well as classical French films at the amazing **Cinémathèque Française** in Paris, the magnificent film archive and public theater founded in 1936 by Georges Franju and Henri Langlois to promote cinema study and cinema culture in France and throughout the world. During the Occupation, Langlois kept the enterprise in operation secretly at great personal risk, and afterward, through André Malraux, minister of culture, he obtained a large government subsidy for it.

Today, the Cinémathèque is the largest public film archive in the world, housing more than 50,000 films, three theaters, and a museum in the Palais de Chaillot devoted entirely to film history. It was Langlois who preserved the works of Griffith, Keaton, Gance, Vigo, and Renoir for the postwar generation of *cinéphiles*, and introduced them to the then unrecognized genius of directors such as Ingmar Bergman and the great Japanese masters Akira Kurosawa and Yasujiro Ozu. Under Langlois's tutelage, these young men came to



Alfred Hitchcock on the August–September 1956 cover of *Cahiers du cinéma*.

love film and desperately wanted to become filmmakers themselves, but found French commercial cinema inaccessible to them because of the powerful influence exerted by the trade unions. Because they knew more about film than any other generation in history, based on the experience of actual viewing, they became critics and theorists instead.

The *Cahiers* critics had two basic principles. The first, deriving from Bazin, was a rejection of montage aesthetics in favor of mise-en-scène, the long take, and composition in depth. Mise-en-scène, the "placing-in-the-scene," is probably best defined as the creation of mood and ambience, though it more literally means structuring the film through camera placement and movement, blocking the action, directing the actors, and so on—in other words, everything that takes place on the set prior to the editing process. Integral to the concept of mise-en-scène is the notion that film should be not merely an intellectual or rational experience, but an emotional and psychological one as well.

The second tenet of the *Cahiers* critics, derived from Astruc, was the idea of personal authorship that François Truffaut expressed in a 1954 essay titled "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français" ("A Certain Tendency in French Cinema") as *la politique des auteurs*. This "policy of authors," christened "the auteur theory" by the American critic Andrew Sarris, states that film should ideally be a medium of personal artistic expression and that the best films are therefore those that most clearly bear their maker's "signature"—the stamp of his or her individual personality, controlling obsessions, and cardinal themes. The implicit assumption was that with each successive film, an auteur grows increasingly proficient and mature in vision, an assumption that is not always borne out by fact.

Truffaut's essay, which appeared in *Cahiers du cinéma* (no. 31) for January 1954, began by attacking the postwar "tradition of quality"—that is, the commercial scenarist tradition of Aurenche and Bost, Spaak, and directors such as Clair, Clément, Clouzot, Autant-Lara, Cayatte, and Yves Allégret, with its heavy emphasis on plot and dialogue. The key figure in this literary/theatrical cinema was the scriptwriter, the director being merely "the gentleman who added the pictures." To these *littérateurs* and their *cinéma de papa*, Truffaut counterposed *un cinéma d'auteurs*, in the work of such French writer-directors as Gance, Vigo, Renoir, Cocteau, Becker, Bresson, and Ophüls, and of numerous American directors—both major and minor—who had somehow managed to make personal statements, despite the restrictions imposed on them by the studio system. Some of the American choices, such as Welles, Hitchcock, Hawks, Lang, Ford, Nicholas Ray, and Anthony Mann—all masters of mise-en-scène—made perfect sense. Others, such as Jerry Lewis, Otto Preminger, and Roger Corman, were based less on the quality of their films than on evidence of their personal directorial control. And the unquestioning allegiance that the *Cahiers* group gave to the figures in its pantheon made many skeptics wonder whether one form of ironclad dogmatism had not simply been exchanged for another.

Yet for all of its deficiencies (and a proneness to fanaticism and cultism seems to be a major one), the auteur theory does offer a valuable schematic model for interpreting the filmmaking process and goes some way toward solving a very basic methodological problem of film criticism: that is, to whom or what does one attribute cinematic creation? Furthermore, the *Cahiers* critics were able to partly vindicate the auteur theory by becoming filmmakers themselves and practicing it.

The New Wave's challenge to the "tradition of quality" was economic, as well as aesthetic. Under the system that prevailed from 1953 to 1959, government aid was awarded to productions by the Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC, founded in 1946) on the basis of reputation, so potential directors needed an established record of success, and very few new people could hope to enter the industry. In 1959, however, the laws relating to aid for film productions were changed to allow first films to be funded by the state on the basis of a submitted script alone, enabling hundreds of new filmmakers to become their own producers and creating the economic context for the New Wave. Moreover, the international commercial success of films such as *Les quatre cents coups*, which was produced for $75,000 and brought in $500,000 for its American distribution rights alone, dramatically increased the number of private producers willing to finance new work. Thus, for a while at least, until the failures mounted, Truffaut's concept of *un cinéma d'auteurs* was realized in France by placing the control of the conception of a film in the same hands that controlled the actual production.

The New Wave (*Nouvelle Vague*): First Films

The first films of this "new wave" of French directors were independently produced dramatic shorts, many of them shot in 16mm and subsequently blown up for 35mm exhibition. Yet the first feature-length

success of the New Wave is generally acknowledged to have been Claude Chabrol's first film, *Le beau serge* (*The Handsome Serge/Bitter Reunion*, 1958), although Varda's *La Pointe-Courte* preceded it by three years. While still a *Cahiers* critic, Chabrol (1930–2010) shot *Le beau serge*, about the rehabilitation of a village drunkard, on location with funds provided by a small inheritance. The success of *Le beau serge* enabled Chabrol to follow it with *Les cousins* (*The Cousins*, 1959), an ironic study of sexual intrigue and murder set against the backdrop of Parisian student life.

The year 1959 was the annus mirabilis for the New Wave, because three of the main figures of the movement released their first features. François Truffaut's *Les quatre cents coups* (*The 400 Blows*), made for $75,000 with a loan from his father-in-law when the director was twenty-seven years old, is a lyrical but wholly unsentimental account of an adolescent delinquent, shot on location in Paris. Dedicated to the memory of André Bazin (who died on the second day of shooting) and photographed in Dyaliscope (a French version of CinemaScope) by the talented New Wave cinematographer Henri Decaë (1915–1987), the film is consciously evocative of Vigo's *Zéro de conduite* (1933). It won the prize for Best Direction at Cannes in the year of its release, as well as the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Foreign Film in 1959. It was also the first film in Truffaut's Antoine Doinel series, a kind of continuing cinematic autobiography starring Jean-Pierre Léaud (b. 1944), an actor who physically resembled Truffaut.

More remarkable in structure and theme was Alain Resnais's first feature, *Hiroshima, mon amour* (1959), which, like *Nuit et brouillard*, examines the relationship between time and memory in the context of a terrible atrocity. With a brilliant script by the novelist Marguerite Duras (who was to become an important director herself in the 1970s) and cinematography by Sacha Vierny (1919–2001), the film concerns a love affair between a French actress working in Hiroshima and a Japanese architect, in the course of which both recall their memories of the past war in Asia and Europe. Resnais maintains the counterpoint between present and past by continuously shifting narrative modes from objective to subjective and, in several extraordinary sequences, by combining dramatic footage of the





Emmanuelle Riva and Eiji Okada in *Hiroshima, mon amour* (Alain Resnais, 1959).

couple making love with documentary footage of the aftermath of the Hiroshima blast. *Hiroshima, mon amour*, like *Les quatre cents coups*, was a great commercial success and conferred further prestige on the New Wave by winning the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Foreign Film in 1960.

The third important New Wave film of 1959, Jean-Luc Godard's *À bout de souffle* (*Breathless*), was in many ways the most characteristic and influential film of the movement. *Breathless*, which was written by Godard after a story by Truffaut and shot by cinematographer Raoul Coutard (b. 1924) in four weeks for less than $90,000, is dedicated to Monogram Pictures, one of the larger American B-film studios of the 1930s and the 1940s, which were famous for their ability to turn out tightly paced films on short shooting schedules and poverty-line budgets. This was precisely the ideal of the New Wave (or, at least, of its dominant *Cahiers* branch), but instead of making cheap films in order to make a quick profit, the New Wave directors made cheap films in order to be able to make films at all, because their productions were necessarily independent of the industry. (Happily, many of the first New Wave films, including *Breathless*, made a great deal of money, which temporarily ensured the future of the movement.)

(left) Jean-Pierre Léaud in *Les quatre cents coups* (*The 400 Blows*; François Truffaut, 1959).

Modeled on the American gangster film in a simultaneous spirit of parody and homage, *Breathless* is about an amoral young thug on the run who is finally betrayed to the police by his American girlfriend (deliberate shades of *Pépé le moko* [1937] and *Quai des brumes* [1938]), and it contains virtually every major technical characteristic of the New Wave film. These include the use of shaky, **handheld** 35mm camera shots; location shooting; natural lighting; improvised plot and dialogue; and **direct sound** recording on location with portable tape machines that were electronically synchronized with the camera.

Yet the most important technical characteristic of the New Wave film was its jagged, elliptical style of editing, which employed a high percentage of jump cuts within and mismatches between scenes in order to destroy the spatial and temporal continuity of the viewing experience. As *Breathless* begins, for example,



Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg in *À bout de souffle* (*Breathless*; Jean-Luc Godard, 1959).

we witness the following sequence of events: Michel, the young hood, steals a car in Paris with the help of his French mistress and speeds out into the countryside alone; at high speed, he passes several other vehicles on his side of the road; he briefly contemplates picking up two female hitchhikers; and, to occupy the time, he talks to himself and to the audience about a variety of subjects. Next, he passes a large truck at a road construction site and suddenly finds himself pursued by two motorcycle cops; he pulls off the road into a small wooded area and pretends to be having car trouble. One cop passes him by, the second spots him and pulls into the wood. At this point, Michel reaches into the car, grabs a revolver, and guns down the cop. He then flees across an open field and hitchhikes back to Paris. In a conventional commercial film of the day—French, American, British, or Italian—this sequence would have been rendered in many separate shots fully depicting each of the actions. In *Breathless*, the whole sequence is conveyed in only several brief shots: alternating close-ups of Michel and his mistress on a Paris street; a quick take of the car theft at eye level; medium-close shots, taken from the passenger's seat, of Michel driving the car; medium-long shots, which pass away rapidly through the windshield, of the road and later the hitchhikers; a shot of the motorcycle cops appearing in the rearview mirror, followed by one of Michel pulling off the road and opening the hood of his car as the cop discovers him; an extreme close-up of the revolver, followed by a medium-long shot of the murder; a long shot of Michel running across a field; and a medium shot of him arriving in Paris as a passenger in the backseat of an unidentified car. Later in the film, Godard begins many scenes with a huge disorienting close-up and only later cuts, or pulls his camera back, to reveal the context of the action—which completely reversed conventional practice of the day.

Most radical of all, however, was Godard's use of the jump cut, in which a section of a single continuous shot is eliminated and then what remains is spliced together, creating a completely nonnaturalistic ellipsis in the action and calling attention to the director's power to manipulate all aspects of his medium. This radical elimination of transitional scenes (of what Hollywood calls **establishing shots**—medium or long shots of exteriors that indicate changes in dramatic space), and even of continuity *within* the shot itself, was thought extremely confusing when Godard and his peers first practiced it on a large scale. Yet it is no more than a logical extension of the discoveries of Méliès, Porter, and Griffith, that cinematic narrative is by its nature *dis*continuous or, as Eisenstein discovered, that spatial and temporal continuity in the cinema resides not on the screen but in the viewer's mind as it makes the connections that the images on the screen, by their arrangement, suggest.

The New Wave: Origins of Style

These conventions, like all film conventions, sprang from two sources—theoretical conviction and material circumstances (not necessarily in that order). The material circumstances were these: the young directors of the New Wave were the first *film*-educated generation of filmmakers in history. They approached the cinema from the experience of having viewed almost the whole of its history at Langlois's Cinémathèque Française and from having written about it theoretically and critically in *Cahiers du cinéma* for nearly a decade. When they finally came to practice cinema, they knew more about the medium as an art form and less about the practical aspects of production than anyone who had ever made films before them. Consequently, they made many mistakes that their low budgets and tight shooting schedules would not permit them to correct. Like the Soviet filmmakers during the film-stock shortage that followed the 1917 Revolution, the New Wave directors could not afford to retake shots, so they relied on elliptical editing to conceal technical

defects on the screen. Jump cuts, for example, were a means not only of creating perceptual dislocation in the audience, but also of restoring botched scenes by excising some actor's or cameraman's blunder from the middle of a take.

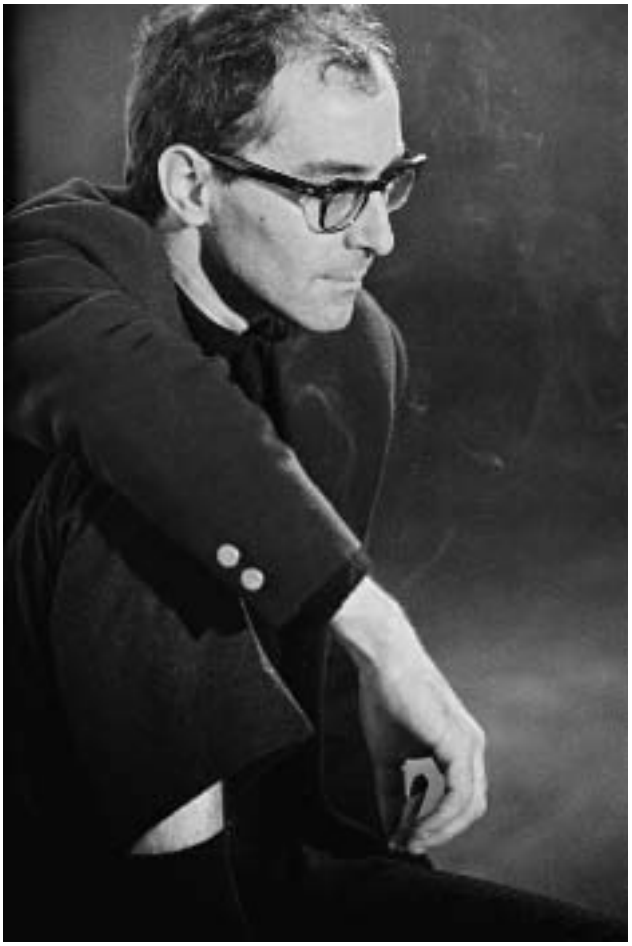
Yet there were sound theoretical reasons for the stylistic conventions of the New Wave, as well as budgetary ones. If location shooting with handheld cameras was inexpensive, it was also totally at odds with the fluid, studio-bound cinematography of the contemporary commercial film. If jagged editing and jump-cutting were useful in concealing defective footage, they also eliminated the smooth transitions that permit an audience to forget that it is watching a film—that is, a consciously crafted product of human imagination, rather than some "found" reality.

The psychological effect of these conventions—and they must be considered calculated effects by the directors, as well as functions of economic necessity—is to establish aesthetic distance between the audience and the film. New Wave films constantly remind us that we are watching a film, and *not* the reality that a film inevitably resembles, by calling attention to their "filmicness"—that is, to their artificially created nature. The abrupt and, above all, obvious manipulation of our perception in these films, through the use of the jump cut, handheld cameras, and so forth, jolts us out of our conventional involvement with the narrative and our traditional identification with the characters, who are often less recognizable as characters than as actors playing characters. This is because New Wave cinema is, in a sense, self-reflexive cinema, or *metacinema*—film about the process and nature of film itself.

According to the New Wave *cinéastes* (loosely, "film artists"), the conventional cinema had too faithfully and for too long reproduced our normal way of seeing things through its studiously unobtrusive techniques. The invisible editing and imperturbably smooth camera styles of commercial cinema of the 1930s, the 1940s, the 1950s, and much of the 1960s were designed



Metacinema: François Truffaut and crew shooting *L'amour à vingt ans* (1962) on location.



Jean-Luc Godard (1965).

to draw the spectator's attention away from the fact that he or she was watching a consciously crafted artifact. Yet the disruptive editing and camera styles of the New Wave say to us constantly, "Look, there's a film being made right before your eyes," that whenever we watch a film, the process immediately beyond the borders of the frame is being controlled by a handful of artists.

The theoretical position of the New Wave filmmakers is therefore that film must constantly call attention to the process of its own making and to the medium's own unique language—thus, the unparalleled cinematic *éclat*, or explosiveness, of the New Wave, its emphasis on "magical" cinematic tricks such as the jump cut; the iris-in and iris-out, decelerated and accelerated motion; and optically violent camera movement—all devices of which film and no other medium is capable. In this sense, the New Wave represents a return to Méliès and his conspicuously cinematic brand of conjuring. On one hand, it envisions film as a special kind of magic that requires of its viewers a uniquely cinematic way of seeing to comprehend. On the other hand, the New Wave reaches back equally to Lumière, because its most characteristic techniques are essentially documentary in practice. In fact, *cinéma vérité*, the chief documentary mode of the 1960s and the 1970s, constitutes an application of New Wave shooting and recording practices to real events, rather than staged ones.

Furthermore, Jean-Luc Godard, the most innovative and radical director to emerge from the New Wave, has virtually rejected narrative cinema in favor of cinematic "essays" on ideology and social praxis. New Wave cinema is aware of this paradox, because it is aware of its history and conscious of the mediating position it holds between the narrative and documentary traditions of Western film. The allusions to, and "quotations" from, films of the past (sometimes called *hommages*), with which New Wave films are replete, are no mere mannerisms, but rather testaments to the critical-historical cinematic consciousness out of which the movement grew.

Major New Wave Figures

The critical and commercial success of the New Wave in 1959 was so great that between 1960 and 1962, more than one hundred new French directors were able to find funding for their first features—an extraordinary thing in an industry formerly so conservative. In some cases, the director of a commercial hit, such as Godard or Truffaut, would produce for a less fortunate friend. In many others, a French commercial studio would produce the movie, hoping to come up with a smash hit such as *Breathless* on a B-film budget. In fact, the climate of creative and commercial enthusiasm during these two years was such that virtually anyone with the will to do so could obtain financial backing to make a low-budget film, although many who turned to directing lacked either the talent or the discipline to bring their projects to a successful conclusion.

The commercial failures of the less talented began en masse in 1962, and by 1964, the studios had been so badly disappointed by well-intentioned amateurs that production money for first features was more difficult to raise than it had been in the 1950s. By this time, the New Wave as a collective phenomenon was over, and the French film industry had resumed

(right) Henri Serre, Oskar Werner, and Jeanne Moreau in *Jules et Jim* (François Truffaut, 1962).

its conventionally rigid contours. Yet French cinema continued to be dominated creatively by the handful of young *cinéastes* who had initiated the movement and who emerged from it as distinctly major figures—François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, Claude Chabrol—and by a small group of sophisticated but less spectacular talents, such as Louis Malle, Eric Rohmer, Jacques Demy, Jacques Rivette, and Agnès Varda.

François Truffaut

François Truffaut (1932–1984), the most commercially successful of the post–New Wave group, was able to maintain his independence by forming his own production company, Les Films du Carrosse (1957), named in *hommage* to Renoir's *Le carrosse d'or* (1952). His main cinematic influences were the American B-film, film noir, and the work of Alfred Hitchcock and Jean Renoir. He followed *Les quatre cents coups* (1959) with what he called "a respectful tribute to the Hollywood B-film," *Tirez sur le pianiste* (*Shoot the Piano Player*, 1960), based on an American gangster thriller (*Down There*) by the novelist David Goodis. Criticized on its release for its radical shifts in mood from comedy to melodrama to tragedy and for the manipulativeness of its disjointed narrative style, *Shoot the Piano Player* was nevertheless Truffaut's *Breathless*—a quintessentially New Wave film replete with bizarre visual puns, allusions to other films, a mixture or "explosion" of genres, and all of the self-reflexive anti-conventions of the movement. Like *Les quatre cents coups*, it was stunningly photographed by the innovative New Wave cinematographer Raoul Coutard in Dyaliscope.

Truffaut's third feature, *Jules et Jim* (1962), stands as a tribute to the influence of Renoir and the French lyrical tradition. As in Renoir's work, the basic themes of *Jules et Jim* are friendship and the impossibility of achieving true freedom in love (or, as Truffaut himself put it, "monogamy is impossible, but anything else is worse"). While it appropriately avoids the self-conscious pyrotechnics of *Shoot the Piano Player*, *Jules et Jim* is gorgeously composed and photographed in Franscope,



yet another version of CinemaScope, by Raoul Coutard and sustains its emotional lyricism through the unconventional use of telephoto zooms, slow motion, freeze frames, anamorphic distortion (of World War I combat footage), and even a helicopter shot.

After directing *Antoine et Colette*, also shot by Coutard in Franscope, for the anthology film *L'amour à vingt ans* (*Love at Twenty*, 1962), Truffaut produced in collaboration with this inventive cinematographer a restrained and sympathetic study of middle-aged adultery, *La peau douce* (*The Soft Skin*, 1964), which was marred by an overly melodramatic ending. His erratic adaptation of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), Truffaut's first film in color and English, is generally regarded as a failure because it played down traditional science-fiction themes. Yet its portrait of a near-future society of emotionless, hedonistic people mindlessly tripped out on big-screen color television seems more than prophetic today, and Nicolas Roeg's cinematography is first-rate.

In 1967, Truffaut published a book-length interview with Alfred Hitchcock in which he demonstrated his reverence for the American director by comparing him not only to Griffith, Hawks, and Ford, but to Kafka, Dostoevsky, and Poe. Appropriately enough, Truffaut's next two features were conceived as direct tributes to the Hitchcock thriller. *La mariée était en noir* (*The Bride Wore Black*, 1967), photographed by Coutard, is a suspenseful tale of vengeance in which a woman (Jeanne Moreau) relentlessly tracks down and kills the five men responsible for the accidental shooting of her husband on their wedding day. Adapted from a novel by William Irish—the author of the novel on which the film *Rear Window* (Hitchcock, 1954) is based—and with a musical score by a frequent Hitchcock collaborator, Bernard Herrmann, Truffaut's film contains a dense pattern of allusions to specific Hitchcock films, uses Hitchcockian plot construction, and is intensely manipulative of audience expectations to generate suspense. *La sirène du Mississippi* (*Mississippi Mermaid*, 1969), also adapted from a William Irish novel and shot in Dyaliscope by Denys Clerval, is dedicated to Jean Renoir and contains many allusions to his films (especially in its "open" ending, which is a visual *hommage* to the conclusion of *La grande illusion*, 1937). In terms of style and construction, however, this minor thriller about the degradation of an honest man by a femme fatale is pure Hitchcock.

Between *La mariée était en noir* and *La siréne du Mississippi*, Truffaut made his second Antoine Doinel feature, *Baisers volés* (*Stolen Kisses*, 1968), handsomely photographed by Clerval, a tender and affectionate portrait of Antoine's coming to adult consciousness through a series of affairs and, finally, his engagement to Christine (Claude Jade). *Domicile conjugal* (*Bed & Board*, 1970), the third feature in the Doinel series, examines the first few years of Antoine and Christine's marriage, its deterioration under the pressure of an affair, and its ultimate, uneasy reconstitution. The film is light and humorous, and its comedy is quite successful, but like *Jules et Jim*, it also raises some serious questions about the institution of marriage and its alternatives. Truffaut concluded the Doinel series, begun with *Les quatre cents coups* twenty years earlier, with *L'amour en fuite* (*Love on the Run*, 1979), which opens with Antoine's uncontested divorce from Christine and proceeds through his chance encounters with figures from his past.

L'enfant sauvage (*The Wild Child*, 1969), based on the true account of a "wolf-boy" captured in the forests of central France in 1806, was shot in quasi-documentary style by the award-winning cinematographer Néstor Almendros. *The Wild Child* allowed Truffaut to explore more intensively the themes of confinement versus freedom, and social conditioning versus nature, that he had first broached in *Les quatre cents coups*. *Les deux anglaises et le continent* (*Two English Girls*, 1971), adapted like *Jules et Jim* from a novel by Henri-Pierre Roché and set at the turn of the century, inevitably evokes comparison with the earlier film, of which it contains many deliberate echoes. The story of a young Frenchman's love for two English sisters, it was Truffaut's most visually sensuous work to date. Its sumptuous re-creation of la belle époque is conveyed in shots composed after impressionist paintings of the period, and its use of color was the most subtle Truffaut had achieved so far.

Yet *La nuit américaine* (*Day for Night*, 1973) provided the ultimate in self-reflexive cinema: a film starring Jean-Pierre Léaud (the Truffaut figure in the Antoine Doinel series) and directed by Truffaut, about the making of a film, starring Léaud and directed by Truffaut. **Day for night** (or *la nuit américaine*) is the technical term for shooting night scenes in daylight through a filter; by choosing it as his title, Truffaut intended to evoke the entire arsenal of cinematic tricks of which it is merely typical. Dedicated to Dorothy and Lillian Gish, the great Griffith actresses, the entire film is predicated on cinematic illusion, and in this respect, it recalls Fellini's *8½* (1963) and Bergman's *Persona* (1966). It is difficult from the outset to tell whether a scene is occurring in the film or in the film *within* the film, because the cast and crew live so closely together



Isabelle Adjani in *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* (*The Story of Adèle H.*; François Truffaut, 1975).

that there is little distinction between their work and their personal lives. *Day for Night* was in many ways a consummation for Truffaut. It combined the stylistic influence of American realism with that of French lyricism and drew together his dual thematic obsessions with autobiography and psychology in a hymn of praise to the cinema—an art form to which he was passionately devoted for his entire life. It answered the question posed by its own director-character—"Are films more important than life?"—with an emphatic "Yes!"

Truffaut's next project was *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* (*The Story of Adèle H.*, 1975). Based on the diary of Victor Hugo's youngest daughter, this subtle and powerful film demonstrates a total mastery of the new cinematic language that he helped create and triumphantly confirms his status as one of the most important film artists of our time. His films of the late 1970s include the comedies *L'argent de poche* (*Small Change*, 1976) and *L'homme qui aimait les femmes* (*The Man Who Loved Women*, 1977); *La chambre verte* (*The Green Room*, 1978), based on several short stories by Henry James; and *Le dernier métro* (*The Last Metro*, 1980), a fascinating account of life in a small Paris theater under the Nazi Occupation—inspired by the autobiography of the stage and film actor Jean Marais (1913–1998)—which became his biggest box-office success.

In 1979, Truffaut was honored with an extraordinary twenty-year retrospective by the American Film Institute and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; but many critics feared he was becoming the kind of mainstream establishment director he had begun his career by attacking. His last two films, however, marked a modest return to the familiar terrain of obsessive romance with *La femme d'à côté* (*The Woman Next Door*, 1981), and the Hitchcockian comic thriller with *Vivement dimanche!* (*Finally Sunday!*, 1983; American release title: *Confidentially Yours*). On October 21, 1984, François Truffaut died of a brain tumor; he was fifty-two years old.

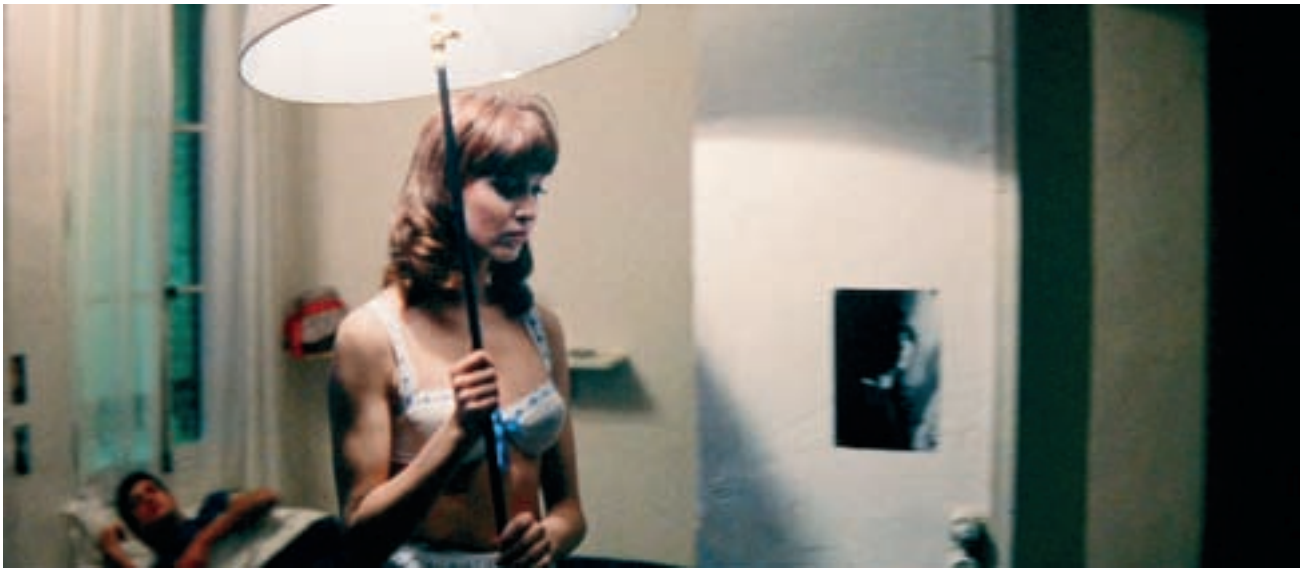
Jean-Luc Godard

Jean-Luc Godard (b. 1930) is the most prolific and stylistically radical of all the directors who came to prominence during the New Wave. He has made more than forty feature films since *Breathless* (1960), working closely with Raoul Coutard as his director of photography on most of them, and he is among the most influential figures in world cinema today. Unlike Truffaut, Godard is a militantly intellectual and ideologically committed filmmaker whose films almost always involve some form of *autocritique* or interrogation of cinema itself. In a certain sense, they collectively constitute a *theory* of cinema because, better than any of his peers, Godard understood the essential impulse of the New Wave. "The whole New Wave," he wrote in *Cahiers*, "can be defined, in part, by its new relationship to fiction and reality." Godard's films have consistently tested this relationship by rejecting narrative in favor of praxis, the working out of social or political theory within the cinematic process.

Since the early 1960s, his films have become increasingly dialectical and rhetorical in structure, and Godard himself calls them "critical essays." Most of these "essays" are personal to the point of being idiosyncratic, and Godard has maintained his independence by producing them quickly and cheaply. His films are therefore not as carefully crafted as those of Truffaut and his other peers, and they frequently appear to be less finished films than unvarnished journals about the making of a film, full of technical blunders and undigested facts. And, unlike his peers, Godard is still in the business of breaking every known cinematic convention—even the more recent conventions established by the New Wave itself—in a ceaseless attempt to expand the medium's form and pursue its potential for artistic, intellectual, and political self-expression.

Several of Godard's early films were characteristic New Wave tributes to American cinema. *À bout de souffle* (*Breathless*, 1960) was modeled on the B-film gangster thriller, and *Une femme est une femme* (*A Woman Is a Woman*, 1961), described by Godard as "a neorealist musical—that is, a contradiction in terms"—was a studio-produced tribute to the American musical comedy, made in Franscope and color. *Le petit soldat* (*The Little Soldier*, 1960), made between these two films, was banned by the French government for three years because it commented on the Algerian War. *Vivre sa vie* (*My Life to Live*, 1962), a study of a woman who chooses to be a prostitute, is constructed in the form of a twelve-part sociological tract on the problem of prostitution, complete with statistics and pseudo-clinical jargon.

With *Les carabiniers* (*The Soldiers/The Riflemen*, 1963), an adaptation of Beniamino Joppolo's play *I carabinieri*, co-written by Roberto Rossellini, Godard created the first of his "critical essays," for, as one critic has said, *Les carabiniers* is less a war movie than "a series of propositions about war." *Le mépris* (*Contempt*, 1963), based on Alberto Moravia's novel *A Ghost at Noon*, was Godard's sixth feature. It was an international



Anna Karina in *Une femme est une femme* (*A Woman Is a Woman*; Jean-Luc Godard, 1961).

co-production starring Jack Palance and Brigitte Bardot, shot in widescreen and color, and like Truffaut's *Day for Night*, it concerns the making of a movie. This film within the film is a version of Homer's *Odyssey* being shot in Rome by Fritz Lang, who plays himself. *Bande à part* (*Band of Outsiders*, 1964) is based on an American pulp thriller and constitutes Godard's first return to the gangster genre since *Breathless*. It deals with a burglary attempt by three Parisian students—two men and a woman—that ends in tragic farce when one of the would-be criminals is killed. In *Une femme mariée* (*A Married Woman*, 1964), ironically subtitled "Fragments of a Film Shot in 1964," Godard mixed a wide range of narrative and documentary styles to create a sociological study of woman's role in modern culture.

In *Alphaville* (1965) Godard used the form of the science-fiction thriller to create a parable about the alienating effects of technology. He makes brilliant use of contemporary Paris to evoke the future, which serves to remind us that the world of Alphaville is already upon us. In *Pierrot le fou* (*Crazy Pete*, 1965), Godard returned to the disjointed and self-reflexive narrative style of *Les carabiniers* and to the generic model of the gangster film: a man (Jean-Paul Belmondo) and a woman (Anna Karina) run away from a Parisian gang to live an idyllic, desert-islandlike existence in the south of France until a series of betrayals causes their horribly violent, if apparently accidental, deaths. Scriptless and virtually plotless, the film comes close to realizing the Godardian ideal of "a film where there has been no writing, no editing, and no sound mixing."

Masculin/féminin (1966) marks a definitive turning away from narrative. Like *Vivre sa vie* and *Une femme mariée*, it is a film of sociological inquiry hung upon a slender plot, but here the plot is almost irrelevant to the inquiry. The film is concerned with illustrating fifteen distinct problems of the younger generation, the "children of Marx and Coca-Cola," members of which are interviewed and interview one another in *cinéma vérité* fashion. Godard shows that their idealism is belied by the world of cynical sex and violence that surrounds them. Since *Masculin/féminin*, Godard's films have become increasingly ideological and, in some cases, structurally random. As he wrote in 1966, "Cinema is capitalism in its purest form. . . . There is only one solution, and that is to turn one's back on the American cinema." The ironic result of this logic was *Made in U.S.A.* (1966).

Though it is loosely based on a detective thriller, *Made in U.S.A.* has no narrative thread at all and is a film intent on destroying virtually every illusion of which cinema—especially, traditional American cinema—is capable. Ostensibly a remake of Hawks's *The Big Sleep* (1946), the film is so self-reflexive as to have no content: characters speak to the audience, explaining their behavior and commenting on the triviality of the plot, and the dialogue is nonsensical and sometimes deliberately rendered inaudible on the sound track. The film's meaning lies at its periphery, in its comment on political violence, the viciousness and stupidity of the Right, the sentimentality and fecklessness of the Left.

Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle (*Two or Three Things I Know about Her*, 1966) is a collage of images and interviews centering around a Parisian housewife who has turned to casual prostitution in order to keep herself in middle-class luxury. The film is a radical indictment of capitalist technocracy in the West, which, Godard holds, makes prostitutes of us all through its system of economic constraints.

Yet Godard's most savage attack on the values of Western capitalist society is *Weekend* (1967), a film that begins as a recognizable, if violent, narrative and ends as an apocalyptic vision of the collapse of civilization in the West. A young bourgeois couple sets out to visit the woman's mother in Normandy to borrow some money from her, but becomes trapped in a monumental weekend traffic jam, which Godard renders in a single slow lateral tracking shot lasting a full four minutes on the screen. Gradually, we pass from a real landscape into a symbolic one, in which the highway is littered with burning automobiles and the bloodied, mutilated bodies of crash victims. From this point on, the film is dominated by images of mindless slaughter and mayhem from which the thin veneer of civilization has been stripped away.

After *Weekend* and the political turmoil of May 1968, Godard attempted to abandon narrative altogether, considering it a bourgeois form. All of Godard's films between 1968 and 1973 were produced by the Dziga Vertov Group (actually an uneasy creative partnership between Godard and the ideologist Jean-Pierre Gorin), and Godard came to make increasing use of the arsenal of agitational techniques employed by the Soviet revolutionary cinema of 1924–1928. *Un film comme les autres* (*A Film Like Any Other*, 1968), for example, is a 16mm record of an elementary political discussion that takes place among several people lying in tall grass, none of whom is clearly distinguishable. Godard makes a point of its randomness by suggesting that a coin be tossed to determine which one of its several reels is screened first.

One Plus One (1968; also known as *Sympathy for the Devil*) is a film of seemingly unrelated fragments: a





Mireille Darc and Jean Yanne in *Weekend* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967).

Bolivian revolutionary hiding out in a London men's room, the Rolling Stones rehearsing the song "Sympathy for the Devil," black-power militants plotting revolution in a junkyard, a television interview with a lobotomized fairy godmother called Eve Democracy, a man reading *Mein Kampf* in a Soho porn shop, and so on.

At one point in *One Plus One*, a character remarks, "There is only one way to be an intellectual revolutionary, and that is to give up being an intellectual." Some critics believe that Godard followed the logic of this statement to the point of nihilism. All of his films for the now defunct Dziga Vertov Group show Godard concerned with the nature and function of ideology, regardless of its medium. Although his later work demonstrates a renewed interest in narrative, it has been suggested that Godard's cinematic "essays" are not films in the conventional sense at all, but a form of narrative embattled with discourse. Nevertheless, Godard's impact on contemporary cinema generally, as distinct from his importance to the French New Wave, has been immense. His most discernible influence in the 1970s and the 1980s was on the materialist cinema of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, the omnibus films of Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, and the award-winning minimalist work of Belgian filmmaker Chantal Akerman (b. 1950). Yet Godard made a whole generation question the accepted conventions of filmmaking, remaining all the while a solitary and independent figure.

(left) Jean-Paul Belmondo and Anna Karina in *Pierrot le fou* (*Crazy Pete*; Jean-Luc Godard, 1965).

After ending his association with Gorin in 1973, Godard experimented with a combination of film and videotape that permitted him to superimpose two or more images on the screen simultaneously in works such as *Numéro deux* (*Number Two*, 1975), *Six fois deux/Sur et sous la communication* (1976), and *Comment ça va?* (*How Goes It?,* 1978). In 1980, Godard produced his first theatrical feature in nearly eight years, and he has continued to make features since, renewing his extraordinary collaboration with Raoul Coutard. In 1987, Godard—who once said that "one could make a good film in twenty seconds"—directed jeans commercials for designers Marithé and François Girbaud (M.F.G.),

confirming for himself, no doubt, his 1967 declaration that "cinema is capitalism in its purest form." Moving beyond semantics, there is finally Godard's *Adieu au langage* (*Goodbye to Language*, 2014), a bold experiment in 3-D techniques shot by Fabrice Aragno over a four-year period in and around the director's home on Lake Geneva in Switzerland.

Alain Resnais

Alain Resnais (1922–2014) is identified with the New Wave because his first major successes, *Hiroshima, mon amour* (1959) and *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (*Last Year at Marienbad*, 1961), both appeared during its height. Yet Resnais was a generation older than the *Cahiers* group, and he began his film career not as a critic but as an editor and a director of short films in the scenarist tradition. Unlike several of his New Wave counterparts, he preferred to work from an original script, usually one written especially for the screen by a major novelist. He also worked slowly and planned his films meticulously in advance of production, in close collaboration with his writers and technicians, believing that film is basically a collective art. Yet Resnais was an avant-garde intellectual who had been strongly influenced by the philosophy of Henri Bergson. And because his main theme was the effect of time on human memory and the relationship between memory and politics, he communicated by exploding the conventional boundaries of narrative form. His fascination with time and memory led Resnais to create remarkable structures for his films, in which past, present, and future are perceived on the same spatial and temporal plane, and in which objectivity and subjectivity are never clearly distinguishable.

In *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (1961), written by French experimental novelist Alain Robbe-Grillet, a man, X, meets a woman, A, at a Baroque chateau that seems to be a resort for the very rich and that may or



may not be Marienbad (a spa in Czechoslovakia). He claims to have met her, or a woman like her, with a man, M, who was perhaps her husband, "last year at Marienbad." She denies this, and their debate, which is a debate about the nature of reality itself, recurs endlessly through the film, as labyrinthine images of past, present, and future, framed in Dyaliscope by cinematographer Sacha Vierny, seem to merge in the same visual continuum of highly stylized tracking shots (a Resnais trademark) and frozen geometric compositions. As Resnais remarked, *Marienbad* represents "an attempt, still crude and primitive, to approach the complexity of thought and its mechanisms." The film won the prestigious Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 1961 and is one of the few authentically modernist works in cinema.

Muriel, ou le temps d'un retour (English title: *Muriel*, 1963) was written by Jean Cayrol, author of the commentary for *Nuit et brouillard* (1955). *Muriel* is a brilliant political film and, although government censors did not recognize it at the time, perhaps the most damning of all films about the Algerian situation as it affected France. Yet in its remarkably complex montage of nearly a thousand shots, Sacha Vierny's luminous color cinematography, the innovative sound recording of Antoine Bonfanti, and a score featuring the music of avant-garde composer Hans Werner Henze, *Muriel* approaches the cinema of pure association and is clearly Resnais's greatest work.

With *La guerre est finie* (*The War Is Over*, 1966), written by the Spanish novelist Jorge Semprún, Resnais entered the arena of political commitment. More conventional in narrative structure, *La guerre est finie* concerns three days in the life of a middle-aged revolutionary named Diego (Yves Montand), who, some thirty years after the Spanish Civil War, still works for the overthrow of the Franco regime. During the 1960s, Resnais's films, like Godard's, became increasingly unfashionable and unconventional, as he pursued the logic of his own artistic development at the cost of financial gain. If Godard's films became critical essays on ideological praxis, Resnais's had always been philosophical investigations into the workings of the human mind, and this meant the loss of popular audiences after his initial success with *Hiroshima, mon amour*. As a result, Resnais was unable to direct for five years after 1968 for lack of financial backing.

(left) Delphine Seyrig and Giorgio Albertazzi in *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (Alain Resnais, 1961).

In 1975, however, his *Stavisky* was released to both critical acclaim and commercial success. Written by Jorge Semprún and starring Jean-Paul Belmondo in the paradoxical title role, *Stavisky* is a political period film about a colossal financial scandal that toppled the French government in 1934. With a melodic score by Stephen Sondheim, it was shot by Sacha Vierny to evoke the two-color Technicolor process of the early 1930s, and it became Resnais's most popular film to date.

Frequently accused of coldness and abstractionism, Resnais was a serious, committed filmmaker whose technical mastery of his medium enabled him to create a handful of films of great visual beauty and intellectual depth that rank among the masterworks of French cinema. When asked, in a recent interview, about the filmmakers who had most influenced him, Resnais mentioned Griffith, Pudovkin, and Eisenstein. He also spoke of the Czech-born British director Karel Reisz (see Chapter 14) as his "real teacher," through Reisz's book *The Technique of Film Editing*. In other words, Resnais clearly saw his work as growing out of the tradition of classical montage. And in his fascination with the manipulation of the space-time continuum, Resnais serves to remind us that montage aesthetics are still alive and well in a film culture that looks to mise-en-scène as a kind of cinematic god.

Claude Chabrol

Claude Chabrol (1930–2010), who had been forced to make a series of commercial thrillers after the financial failure of *Les bonnes femmes* in 1960, returned to the top of his form with *Les biches* (*The Does*, 1968), a subtle, visually exquisite study of lesbian sexual obsession and domination, set in St. Tropez in the winter. *Les biches* marked the beginning of his long collaboration with the cinematographer Jean Rabier (b. 1927), formerly the camera operator for Henri Decaë, who had shot Chabrol's earliest films. Like Resnais, Chabrol believed that filmmaking is a collective enterprise, and after *Les biches*, he had a team of collaborators who worked with him on every film. These included, in addition to Rabier, his co-scenarist, Paul Gégauff; his art director, Guy Littaye; his editor, Jacques Gaillard; and his leading actress (and wife), Stéphane Audran.

Chabrol achieved absolute mastery of his medium with *La femme infidèle* (*The Unfaithful Wife*, 1968)—an investigation into the violent consequences of adultery in a typical French bourgeois family—which owes much technically to Hitchcock. Like Truffaut, Chabrol



(left) Stéphane Audran and Jacqueline Sassard in *Les biches* (*The Does*; Claude Chabrol, 1968).

(with Eric Rohmer) wrote a book on Hitchcock; in fact, Chabrol was stylistically influenced by the American director more than any other figure of the New Wave generation. One critic sees the whole body of Chabrol's work as an extended *hommage* to Hitchcock. Yet, although Chabrol frequently employed Hitchcockian structures and metaphors, such as the simultaneous tracking out and zooming in that occurs near the end of *Vertigo* (1958) and in the final shot of *La femme infidèle*, he had a theme that was very much his own—the impact of a crime of passion on a small but intimate network of human relationships, such as those that exist within a middle-class family, a love triangle, or even a small community. Chabrol dissected the psychological complexities of these relationships with clinical precision, yet in his mature films, this ironic detachment from his material never seems indifferent or cold, and at its best, can evoke feelings of compassion devoid of sentimentality. Perhaps it is Fritz Lang and his deterministically plotted cinema of destiny—*M* (1931), *Fury* (1936), *The Big Heat* (1953)—rather than Hitchcock, whom Chabrol most resembles in this respect.

Que la bête meure (*Killer/The Beast Must Die*, 1969) is an ironic revenge tragedy about a man who relentlessly tracks down the driver of an automobile that has killed his young son in a hit-and-run accident and comes to love the murderer's son in the process. Chabrol continued to probe the violence and bestiality that lie just beneath the surface of everyday life in *Le boucher* (*The Butcher*, 1970), which one Parisian critic hailed as the best French film since the Liberation and which is clearly among the best two or three works to emerge from the immediate post–New Wave period. Told with a remarkable economy and purity of cinematic style, *Le boucher* is essentially a love story set in a small French village in which one of the lovers is a sexual psychopath given to murdering young women and mutilating their corpses. This "butcher," however, is made the most sympathetic character in the entire film, and the compassionate psychological study of his relationship with a young schoolteacher, who loves him even as she becomes increasingly convinced of his guilt, represents a high point in contemporary French cinema.

After *Le boucher*, Chabrol directed approximately one film a year until his death in 2010. Like Truffaut, Godard, and Resnais, Chabrol is a major figure in contemporary French cinema, although his films of the 1980s were uneven.



Jean Yanne and Stéphane Audran in *Le boucher* (*The Butcher*; Claude Chabrol, 1970).

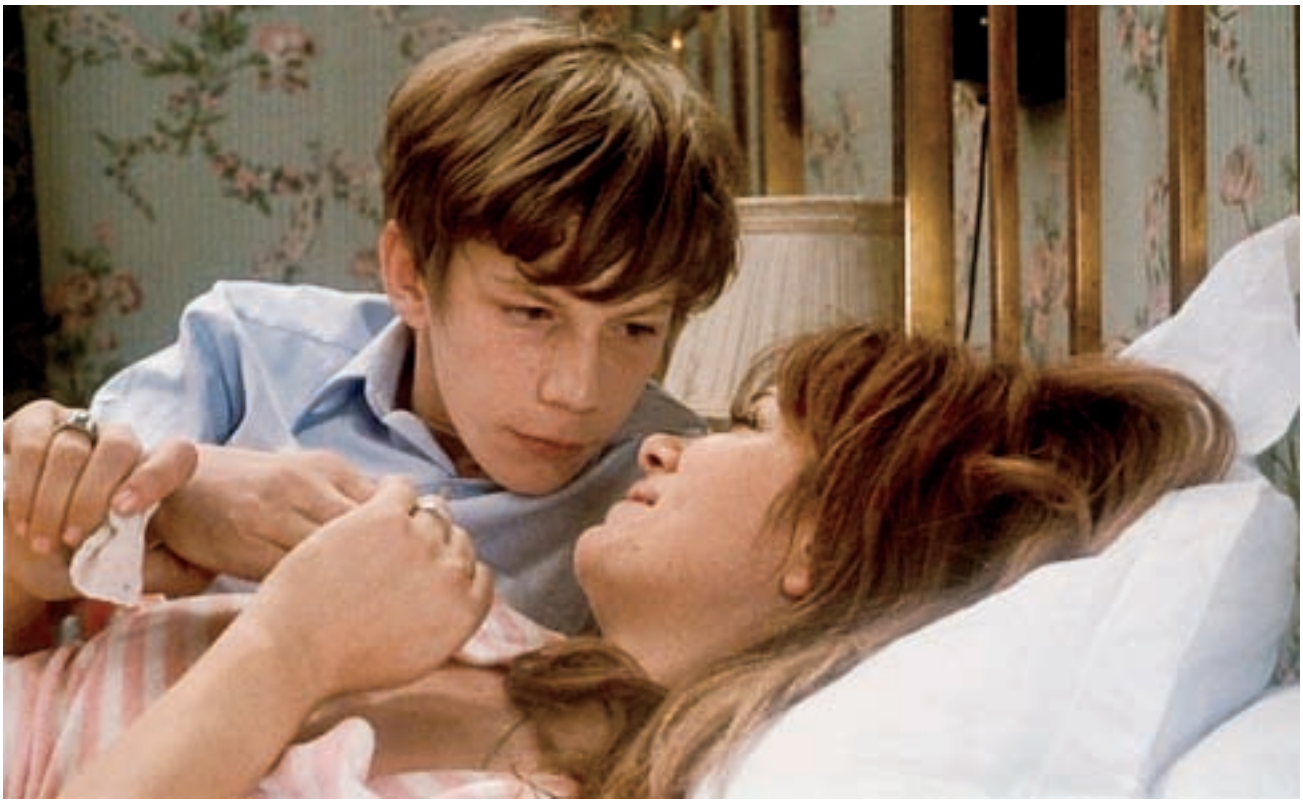
Louis Malle

Louis Malle (1932–1995), a former assistant to Bresson and the celebrated underwater filmmaker Jacques-Yves Cousteau (with whom he co-directed *Le monde du silence* [*The Silent World*, 1956]), began his career as a director, two years before the debuts of Godard and Truffaut, with the taut suspense thriller *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* (*Frantic/Elevator to the Gallows*, 1957) and earned an international reputation the following year with *Les amants* (*The Lovers*, 1958). This lyrical film about a brief love affair between a bored socialite and a young student for whom she leaves her husband was beautifully photographed by Henri Decaë and produced with Malle's own funds.

Zazie dans le métro (1960) was an anarchic adaptation of Raymond Queneau's novel about a foul-mouthed



Jeanne Moreau in *Les amants* (*The Lovers*; Louis Malle, 1958).



Benoît Ferreux and Lea Massari in *Le souffle au coeur* (*Murmur of the Heart*; Louis Malle, 1971).

ten-year-old girl who comes to visit her uncle in Paris and wreaks havoc everywhere she goes. The film is a technically exciting attempt to find visual equivalents for Queneau's neo-Joycean puns through the use of trick shots, superimposition, variable camera speeds, jump cuts, and multiple allusions to other books and films (especially Resnais's *Hiroshima, mon amour*; Fellini's *La dolce vita*; and Malle's own *Les amants*). Malle continued his experiments in narrative form in *Vie privée* (*Private Life*, 1961), a film about a young provincial girl's rise to stardom, based loosely on the experience of its own star, Brigitte Bardot.

Yet *Le feu follet* (*The Fire Within/Will o' the Wisp*, 1963), adapted by the director from a novel by Drieu La Rochelle, with a piano score by Erik Satie, is regarded as Malle's masterpiece of the 1960s. It depicts the last forty-eight hours in the life of an alcoholic playboy, who is relentlessly driven to suicide by his disgust at the world around him. Many critics feel that the film's mood of psychological intensity and Malle's sureness of touch in sustaining it bring *Le feu follet* close to the best work of Bresson. After contributing to the 1967 collective film *Loin du Vietnam*, Malle journeyed to the East to film the feature-length *Calcutta* (1969), part of his brilliant six-hour documentary essay *Phantom India* (1969), for French television. This film, which has also been shown theatrically, offers a marvelously complex vision of the paradoxical subcontinent that has always so fascinated and puzzled the West.

In 1971, Malle produced a masterpiece equal to *Le feu follet* in the remarkable *Le souffle au coeur* (*Murmur of the Heart*), a delicate and irresistibly funny tale of casual incest among the bourgeoisie of Dijon in 1954—the time of the fall of Dien Bien Phu, Vietnam. Scripted by Malle and sumptuously photographed by Decaë, this film offers an amiable, intelligent, and perversely humorous portrait of middle-class French family life in the postwar era, as well as a sensitive study of the sexual and social agonies of adolescence. Malle's next film, *Lacombe, Lucien* (1974), received international acclaim for its subtle portrayal of a seventeen-year-old peasant boy who joins the French Gestapo during the Occupation for no particular reason.

In 1978, Malle directed *Pretty Baby* in the United States. Shot entirely on location in New Orleans by Sven Nykvist, this controversial film deals with a love affair between an eccentric photographer and a child prostitute in a turn-of-the-century Storyville brothel.

Malle's subsequent American films include the brilliant tour-de-force conversation piece *My Dinner with Andre* (1981); *Damage* (1992), an adaptation by David Hare from Josephine Hart's novel about a ruinous erotic obsession set in the context of British politics; and *Vanya on 42nd Street* (1994), about New York theater director—and the subject of *My Dinner with Andre*—Andre Gregory's experimental production of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* in the then derelict New Amsterdam Theater. Malle died of cancer in November 1995.

Unquestionably an important filmmaker, Malle was frequently accused of dilettantism because of his wide range of subjects and styles. Pauline Kael has pointed out that had he chosen a single theme and stuck with it—as Chabrol did—Malle would have been acclaimed as a major figure long ago. Yet Malle's intellectual restlessness and his remarkable ability to present material from simultaneously opposing points of view have led some critics to dismiss him as an elegant stylist with little substance at the core. The best of his films offer ample proof that only the first part of this proposition is true.

Eric Rohmer and Jacques Rivette

The former *Cahiers* critic Eric Rohmer (b. Jean-Marie Maurice Schérer, 1920–2010) began to blossom as a director in the late 1960s. His first feature, *Le signe du lion* (*The Sign of Leo*, 1959), received virtually no notice in the year of its release, but between 1962 and 1963, Rohmer made the first two of his six "Moral Tales," or "*Contes moraux*," whose basic theme is the antagonism that exists between personal identity and sexual temptation, or between the spiritual and passional sides of human nature. *La boulangère de Monceau* (*The Baker of Monceau*, 1962) and *La carrière de Suzanne* (*Suzanne's Vocation*, 1963) were both shorts shot in 16mm and produced by Barbet Schroeder, who also produced the entire series. *La collectionneuse* (*The Collector*, 1967), *Ma nuit chez Maud (My Night at Maud's*, 1969), *Le genou de Claire* (*Claire's Knee*, 1970), and *L'amour, l'après-midi* (English title: *Chloe in the Afternoon*, 1972) are the 35mm features that complete the *Contes moraux*, providing four more variations on Rohmer's single theme and inaugurating his long-term collaboration with the cinematographer Nestór Almendros. Abstract, intellectual, supremely ironic, these inquiries into the nature of human passion are constructed with all the precision of Cartesian logic, and they have been hailed internationally as components of a philosophical masterpiece.

Subsequently, Rohmer made a beautiful, ambiguous version of Heinrich von Kleist's *Die Marquise von O.* (*The Marquise of O.*, 1975), which continues his metaphysical probing of human sexuality in the story of a young noblewoman who awakes one day to find herself inexplicably pregnant. Perhaps because of his late start, Rohmer was one of the few original New Wave figures to consistently produce major work. During the 1980s, he contributed yet another extraordinary contemporary cycle titled "Comedies and Proverbs," achieving a formal beauty and classical precision unequaled even in his previous work. Several of these were shot in 16mm and blown up for 35mm theatrical exhibition, as in the earliest days of the New Wave. Rohmer's cycle of four seasonal films dealing with the power of myth—*Conte de printemps* (1990), *Conte d'hiver* (1992), *Conte d'été* (1996), and *Conte d'automne* (1998)—was followed by *L'anglaise et le duc* (English title: *The Lady and the Duke*, 2001), based on the memoirs of a Scottish gentlewoman stranded in Paris during the Great Terror of 1792, whose precincts are simulated digitally from contemporary-looking paintings and panoramas.

Jacques Rivette (b. 1928), another *Cahiers* critic and former assistant to both Renoir and Becker, also directed a handful of important films in the 1960s that show a marked predilection for literature and the theater. *Paris nous appartient* (*Paris Belongs to Us*, 1960) concerns the members of a Parisian acting troupe who are rehearsing a version of Shakespeare's *Pericles*. Rivette shot *Paris nous appartient* on a day-to-day basis between 1957 and 1959, with money for film stock borrowed from Truffaut and a camera borrowed from Chabrol. (Appropriately, the "film" that the Doinel family goes to see at the Gaumont-Palace in *Les quatre cents coups* is *Paris nous appartient*, although it was in fact still in the process of production.) None of the cast or crew was paid until after the film's release, at which time the *Cahiers* group issued a joint statement concerning its crucial importance to *la politique des auteurs*. Rivette's film, they wrote, was "primarily the fruit of an astonishing persistence over several years to bring to the screen a personal vision of the world as rich and diverse *as if expressed by any other means*" (italics added).

Rivette's second feature, *La religieuse* (*The Nun*, 1965), was based on Denis Diderot's eighteenth-century novel about a woman driven to prostitution and suicide through the hypocrisy of religious orders. This bleak film acquired something of a sensational reputation due to its suppression in France, but its sober camera style and rather conventional narrative



Anna Karina in *La religieuse* (*The Nun*; Jacques Rivette, 1965).

structure lend it a seriousness that no amount of scandal can belie. Rivette's third film is his greatest to date, and it, too, reveals his literary tastes. *L'amour fou* (*Crazy Love*, 1968) is a four-hour study of the slow disintegration of a marriage, set against the filming of a television production of Racine's tragedy *Andromaque*, which provides Rivette with a laboratory in which to explore questions about the nature of film and stage illusion.

During the 1970s, Rivette made six features but only two of them, *Céline et Julie vont en bateau* (*Celine and Julie Go Boating*, 1974) and *Duelle* (1976), were distributed outside of France. In the 1980s and the 1990s, Rivette continued to elaborate the mysteries of identity in such vaguely surrealistic films as *Le pont du nord* (*North Bridge*, 1981), *Hurlevent* (*Wuthering Heights*, 1985), and *La belle noiseuse* (*The Beautiful Troublemaker*, 1991), a four-hour adaptation from Balzac that became a box-office hit in France. Owing to his obscurity and artistic integrity, Rivette had little commercial success before his work took a more popular turn in the mid-1990s, and he continued to actively direct features until 2009.

Agnès Varda, Jacques Demy, and Others

Agnès Varda (b. 1928), whose *La Pointe-Courte* (1955) had been something of a New Wave landmark, continued to write and direct fine films in the 1960s. Her second feature, *Cléo de cinq à sept* (*Cléo from 5 to 7*, 1962), photographed by Jean Rabier, depicts exactly ninety minutes (the running time of the film) in the life of a young pop singer who is waiting for a lab report that will tell her whether she has cancer. *Le bonheur* (*Happiness*, 1965) is a strangely detached film about a happily married family man whose affair with another woman causes his wife to commit suicide and who proceeds to lead a happy existence with his

mistress after his wife's death. The film is highly decorative but ambiguous in terms of psychological and moral considerations. In *Les créatures* (*The Animals*, 1966), Varda examined the relationship between fantasy and reality in the mind of a writer who talks to animals and cannot distinguish real people from the characters in his novels. Varda also contributed to the collective *Loin du Vietnam* (1967), and in 1969, she came to America to make the improvisational feature *Lions Love*.

During the 1970s, Varda directed the semi-documentary *Daguerréotypes* (1976; French release, 1979), a feature-length study of the rue Daguerre in Paris, where she had lived for many years, and *L'une chante, l'autre pas* (*One Sings, the Other Doesn't*, 1977), a fifteen-year chronicle of two women friends pursuing totally different lifestyles. With *Vagabond* (1985), Varda produced a Bressonian film about an aimlessly drifting teenage girl and the people she meets before her wretched death from exposure. In the early 1990s, Varda collaborated with her dying husband, the director Jacques Demy, to produce a filmic autobiography/biography of his youth. The resulting *Jacquot de Nantes* (1991) covers Demy's life through 1949, at which point his lifelong infatuation with cinema began to fulfill itself as a career. After another documentary about her late husband (*L'univers de Jacques Demy* [1995]), Varda made the self-reflexive documentary feature *Les glaneurs et les glaneuses* (*The Gleaners and I*, 2000), which examines the social, cultural, and political implications of scavenging, even as it contemplates her own mortality.

Demy himself (1931–1990) became a specialist during the 1960s in colorful, bittersweet melodramas reminiscent of poetic realism and the work of Max Ophüls. His *Lola* (1961), which is dedicated to Ophüls and owes much to the fluid camera work of Raoul Coutard, is a gay, lighthearted film about love, set in Nantes and similar in style to *La ronde*. It has been called "a musical without songs or dances," and it earned Demy an international reputation. *Les parapluies de Cherbourg* (*The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, 1964) is



Claire Drouot and Jean-Claude Drouot in *Le bonheur* (*Happiness*; Agnès Varda, 1965).

an actual musical about a romance between a shop girl and a service-station attendant, in which the dialogue is sung, as in an opera; it is also notable for the vivid decor of designer Bernard Evein (1929–2006) and the riotous color cinematography of Jean Rabier. *Les demoiselles de Rochefort* (*The Young Girls of Rochefort*, 1966) is a lively *hommage* to the Hollywood musical, directed in collaboration with Gene Kelly. After the American-made *Model Shop* (1968), in 1982, Demy returned successfully to his all-singing formula with *Une chambre en ville* (*A Room in Town*), his first French-language film in more than eight years.

After the Wave

Other noteworthy French filmmakers since the New Wave who have distinct ties with it are Philippe de Broca (1933–2004), a former assistant to Chabrol and Truffaut, who has become a skilled director of sophisticated comedy and satire. During the 1990s, de Broca did most of his work for French television. Also, Pierre Étaix (b. 1928), a former circus clown and gag writer for Jacques Tati, directed a number of excellent comic films in the tradition of Max Linder and Buster Keaton; Étaix starred in all of his own films but stopped directing features in 1971. The former actor Jean-Pierre Mocky (b. 1929) became a fine and prolific director of iconoclastic comedy, and his later films are notable for their edgy black humor. Alain Robbe-Grillet (1922–2008), the leading practitioner of the French *nouveau roman* and the scriptwriter for Resnais's *L'année dernière à Marienbad*, turned to directing in the 1960s and the 1970s with *L'homme qui ment* (*He Who Lies*, 1968), followed by *Le jeu avec le feu* (*Playing with Fire*, 1975) and *La belle captive* (*The Beautiful Prisoner*, 1983). His last film was *Un bruit qui rend fou* (English title: *The Blue Villa,* 1995), set in a brothel on an isolated Greek island. His films are all narratives about the mental process of constructing narratives, and he makes no distinction between them and his novels, calling both *ciné romans* (film novels).

In 1973, Jean Eustache (1938–1981) contributed perhaps the last authentically New Wave film in *La maman et la putain* (*The Mother and the Whore*). This provocative two-hundred-and-twenty-minute assault on the intellect and the senses focuses on the disillusionment of the generation that produced the political upheaval of May 1968, and it won the Special Jury Prize at Cannes in the year of its release. Alain Jessua (b. 1932) produced several important films during the 1960s, including the remarkable *La vie à l'envers* (*Life Upside Down*, 1964), a subjective portrait of the inception of madness, and *Jeu de massacre* (*The Killing Game*, 1967), in which the protagonist becomes so obsessed with the heroes of his favorite comic strip that he can no longer distinguish fantasy from reality.

Later, Jessua directed *Traitement de choc* (*Shock Treatment*, 1974), a horror film by genre but thematically a parable of capitalist exploitation of the underdeveloped nations (Portuguese workers are murdered so that their blood may be given to a rich Frenchman undergoing an exotic medical treatment). The single New Wave feature by Jacques Rozier (b. 1926), *Adieu Philippine* (1962), has acquired the reputation of a minor masterpiece, although it is really something less than that—an engagingly improvised narrative about a Parisian youth in the 1960s, filmed in *cinéma vérité* fashion, which contains a hilarious parody of French television.

The Greek-born director Constantine Costa-Gavras (b. 1933), formerly associated with conventional thrillers, developed into a masterful director of political films in the 1970s with *Z* (1969) and *L'aveu* (*The Confession*, 1970), both shot by Raoul Coutard; *État de siège* (*State of Siege*, 1973), *Section spéciale* (*Special Section*, 1975), *Clair de femme* (*Womanlight*, 1979), all starring Yves Montand; and, for the American producers Edward and Mildred Lewis, *Missing* (1982), a Universal release.

The work of the French director Claude Lelouch (b. 1937) is more controversial than that of the filmmakers discussed previously because of its blatant appeal to a mass audience. Lelouch uses all the modern narrative techniques of his New Wave counterparts, and he is an auteur in the most comprehensive sense of the term in that he produces, directs, writes, photographs, and edits all of his own films, such as *Un homme et une femme* (*A Man and a Woman*, 1966) and *Vivre pour vivre* (*Live for Life*, 1967). While these films are visually engaging, though, they lack emotional depth and have the quality of extended television commercials. Yet in 1995, Lelouch produced a remarkable variation on Victor Hugo's *Les misérables* (1995), which uses the novel as a gloss on an act of heroism and resistance by a Jean Valjean–like character during the Nazi Occupation.

(right) Romy Schneider and Michel Piccoli in *César et Rosalie* (*Cesar and Rosalie*; Claude Sautet, 1972).

Another French director whose films have been largely unaffected by the New Wave but whose recent work has become prominent is Claude Sautet (1924–2000). After graduating from L'Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques (IDHEC) in 1950 and working as an assistant to both Georges Franju and Jacques Becker, Sautet began his career as a director with a series of *Rififi*-style thrillers, such as *Classe tous risques* (English title: *The Big Risk*, 1960) and *L'arme à gauche* (English title: *Guns for the Dictator*, 1965). During the 1970s, he began to collaborate with the scriptwriter Jean-Loup Dabadie and became an astute observer of French bourgeois society, famous for his direction of ensemble playing. Sautet's *Les choses de la vie* (*The Things of Life*, 1970), *Max et les ferrailleurs* (*Max and the Junkmen*, 1971), *César et Rosalie* (*Cesar and Rosalie*, 1972), and *Un coeur en hiver* (*A Heart in Winter*, 1991) all deal with middle-class people trapped at midlife by the patterns of their own routines, and the films have been much admired for their sympathetic understanding of a class that it has become almost obligatory for contemporary European directors to malign. After providing the script for an American remake of *Les choses de la vie* (*Intersection*; Mark Rydell, 1994), Sautet made a final film before his death from cancer in July 2000—*Nelly et Monsieur Arnaud* (1995), a moving analysis of bourgeois repression and failed relationships that encapsulated his main themes and won several French Academy of Cinema Awards (Césars).

Another important French filmmaker not of the New Wave but decisively influenced by it is Bertrand Tavernier (b. 1941). Originally a film critic and a learned *cinéphile*, Tavernier in many ways represents a reconciliation between the post–New Wave generation of directors and the "tradition of quality" so roundly attacked by the *Cahiers* school. His favorite screenplay collaborator, for example, was Jean Aurenche, who, with Pierre Bost, had been the prime target of Truffaut's vilification in "A Certain Tendency in French Cinema" in 1954. In fact, Tavernier chose Aurenche and Bost as the scriptwriters for his first feature, *L'horloger*



de Saint Paul (*The Clockmaker*, 1974), an adaptation of a Simenon murder mystery with a metaphysical twist, which is dedicated to another great screenwriter of "quality," Jacques Prévert.

Since that time, Tavernier has produced films covering an extraordinary range of material, all of them characterized by a combination of New Wave–style cinematic éclat and classically tight narrative construction—for example, *Coup de torchon* (*Clean Slate/Pop. 1280*, 1981), a delicious black comedy of adultery and murder, adapted from a Jim Thompson novel and set in a French colonial town in West Africa in 1938; and *Un dimanche à la campagne* (*A Sunday in the Country*, 1984), based on a novella by Pierre Bost, a lyrical account of a day in the life of an aging impressionist painter who receives a visit from his grown-up children at his country home in the late summer of 1912. Sublimely photographed in widescreen by his new collaborator Bruno de Keyzer, *Un dimanche à la campagne* won Tavernier the Best Director prize at Cannes in the year of its release.

These films, together with his documentary on the American South—*Mississippi Blues* (1983; co-directed with Robert Parrish) and *Round Midnight* (1986), a superbly crafted feature about the friendship that develops between a young French jazz devotee and an aging American jazz musician in Paris—have ensured Tavernier's position as the most respected French filmmaker of his generation, and his latest work has attempted to resolve the cleavage in French cinema between the New Wave and what went before. *Laissez-passer* (2002), for example, offers a revisionist account of filmmaking under the Occupation that disturbed many French intellectuals.

Although Tavernier's goal was to rehabilitate the postwar "tradition of quality" so reviled by the *Cahiers* critics in the 1950s, to some the film seemed like an apologia for collaboration. (*Laissez-passer*, which means something like "Let it go" or "Let's move on," starred several veterans of the scenarist tradition—Jean Aurench, Pierre Bost, Charles Spaak—playing characters very much like themselves.) In addition to his work in features, Tavernier has made a number of brilliant documentaries that reflect an inherently conservative perspective. As a producer, he has also given many younger *cinéastes* their first opportunities to direct, and as president of the French directors guild, La Société des Réalisateurs de Films, Tavernier has become a major force within the leadership of the domestic film industry.

Other prominent post–New Wave directors are Maurice Pialat (1925–2003), Bertrand Blier (b. 1939), Alain Corneau (1943–2010), Claude Miller (1942–2012), Diane Kurys (b. 1948), and André Téchiné (b. 1943). Pialat was a much acclaimed television director when he started making a series of powerful, emotionally confrontational features with *L'enfance nue* (*Naked Childhood*) in 1969, which concerns the problems of an unwanted child; then came *Nous ne vieillirons pas ensemble* (*We Won't Grow Old Together*, 1972), which deals with the breaking up of a love affair, and *La gueule ouverte* (*The Mouth Agape*, 1974), which many consider to be his masterpiece, about a woman's losing battle with cancer.

The uncompromising nature of Pialat's material and his contentious methods of working with actors kept the quantity of his output relatively low, but in films such as *Passe ton bac d'abord* (*Graduate First*, 1979), a chronicle of teenage life in a provincial town; *Loulou* (1980), a violent tale of working-class sexual passions; and *À nos amours* (1983), a disturbing film on the dissolution of bourgeois family life, Pialat achieved an intensity of vision unrivaled in French cinema. Since then, he has made a metaphysical detective thriller, *Police* (1985); an extraordinary adaptation of Georges Bernanos's 1926 novel *Sous le soleil de Satan* (*Under the Sun of Satan*, 1987); and the thoughtful biopic *Van Gogh* (1991). Pialat continued his wry dissection of the family in *Le garçu* (1995), in which a four-year-old boy is passed around among several families as a result of his parents' separation.

After several false starts in the 1960s (e.g., *Hitler, connais pas*, 1963), Bertrand Blier found his métier in anarchic sexual comedy, often featuring the seduction of adults by children, such as *Les valseuses* (English title: *Going Places*, 1974) and *Préparez vos mouchoirs* (*Get Out Your Handkerchiefs*, 1977); incest, *Beau-père* (1981); and, of course, the classical ménage à trois, *La femme de mon pôte* (*My Best Friend's Girl*, 1983) and *Tenue de soirée* (*Evening Dress*, 1986). Blier's other vein is the Buñuelian allegory of *Buffet froid* (*Cold Cuts*, 1979) and *Notre histoire* (*Our Story/Separate Rooms*, 1984).

Alain Corneau appropriated the ever popular *policier* genre (see p. 379) as a vehicle for social criticism in such sober and deliberately paced films as *France société anonyme* (*France, S.A.*, 1974), *Police Python 357* (1976), *La menace* (1977), *Série noire* (1979), and *Le choix des armes* (*Choice of Weapons*, 1981), turning briefly to the colonial epic *Fort Saganne* (1984; reputedly the most expensive film made in France to date), before resuming his engagement with the urban underworld in *Le môme* (*The Kid*, 1986). Less typically, Corneau directed *Tous les matins du monde* (1991), an unusual costume melodrama set at Versailles and

focusing on the lives of Louis XIV's court musicians (Corneau was himself originally a jazz musician).

Claude Miller, a former assistant to both Truffaut and Godard, produced a small body of high-quality films that won him an international critical following; Miller's best works—*Garde à vue* (U.S. title: *The Grilling*, 1981; remade by Stephen Hopkins as *Under Suspicion*, 2000), *Mortelle randonnée* (*Deadly Circuit*, 1983), and *L'effrontée* (*The Hussy*, 1985)—deal persuasively with the theme of obsession and are clearly influenced by the style of American film noir. In 1988, Miller directed *La petite voleuse* (*The Little Thief*), a lively homage to Truffaut, based on a script by him and longtime collaborator Claude de Givray.

The films of Diane Kurys, conversely, have all been vaguely autobiographical and yet charmingly eclectic—*Diabolo menthe* (*Peppermint Soda*, 1977) is about the quotidian lives of teenage sisters in 1963–1964, following their parents' divorce; *Cocktail Molotov* (1980) concerns her own participation in the "events of May" in 1968; *Coup de foudre* (also known as *Entre nous*, 1983) deals with the friendship of two young women in the period 1952–1953, and is modeled on the experience of her parents; and so on, leading finally to her much acclaimed English-language films *Un homme amoureux* (*A Man in Love*, 1987) and *C'est la vie* (1990), which backtracks to the era of *Diabolo menthe* and the moment of the parents' separation.

Originally a *Cahiers* critic, André Téchiné directed some of the French cinema's greatest actresses in award-winning performances once he entered the industry with *Souvenirs d'en France* (also known as *French Provincial*, 1975), which starred Jeanne Moreau as a social-climbing laundress, and *Barocco* (1976), a stylized crime drama starring Isabelle Adjani. Téchiné's breakthrough film was *Les soeurs Brontë* (1979), a psychobiography of the three famous Victorian sisters—creative, repressed, and ultimately dysfunctional—played by Marie-France Pisier (Charlotte), Isabelle Adjani (Emily), and Isabelle Huppert (Anne).

Many of Téchiné's later films involved collaborations with Catherine Deneuve (*Hôtel des Amériques*, 1981; *Le lieu du crime* [*Scene of the Crime*, 1986]; *Ma saison préférée* [*My Favorite Season*, 1993]; and *Les voleurs*, 1996) and Juliette Binoche (*Rendez-vous*, 1985; and *Alice et Martin*, 1998), and tended to deal with dark,



Isabelle Adjani (Emily), Isabelle Huppert (Anne), and Marie-France Pisier (Charlotte) in *Les soeurs Brontë* (André Téchiné, 1979).

romantic themes, often spiked by violence. Téchiné's greatest film may be *Les roseaux sauvages* (*Wild Reeds*, 1994), a coming-of-age drama set in Provence during the Algerian War that won multiple domestic and international awards; it was produced as part of a historic collaboration between French film and television that has since become a model for the entire industry.

In the field of documentary cinema, Chris Marker (b. Christian François Bouche-Villeneuve, 1921–2012) produced a number of brilliant film essays (*Cuba sí*, 1961; *Le joli mai*, 1963; *Le mystère Koumiko*, 1965), as well as the Bergsonian science-fiction short *La jetée* (*The Pier*, 1962), composed almost entirely of still photographs. In 1977, Marker made the striking four-hour compilation film *Le fond de l'air est rouge* (literally, *The Essence of the Air Is Red*), a documentary on the state of radical politics in France in the mid-1970s. Later, he produced *Sans soleil* (*Sunless*, 1983), a remarkable meditation on obsession and repetition that won a British Film Institute Award.

Ever the innovator, Marker experimented with multimedia installations (e.g., *Silent Movie*, 1995) and the Internet. His feature film *Level Five* (1997) represents the experience of a computer-game designer using the Internet to research the Battle of Okinawa in the latter days of World War II; the resulting collage of hyperlinked images causes her to reflect on the relationship between history and memory in her own life. Appropriately, Marker worked for his last decade on an autobiographical CD-ROM titled *Immemory*.

The work of the *cinéma vérité* documentarists Jean Rouch (1917–2004), *Chronique d'un été* (*Chronicle of a Summer*, 1961) and *La punition* (*Punishment*, 1963), and Mario Ruspoli (1925–1986), *Les inconnus de la terre* (*The Unknown of the Earth*, 1961), had wide influence during the 1960s on both documentary (in the films of the Americans D. A. Pennebaker, Albert and David Maysles, and Frederick Wiseman) and narrative cinema (in the work of Rozier, Godard, and Tanner; and in countless individual French, Swiss, Italian, West German, British, and American films). In the 1970s, Rouch continued to produce distinguished ethnographic films, focusing mainly on black African culture.

The most prominent French documentarist, however, is Marcel Ophüls (b. 1927), the son of the great postwar director Max Ophüls. Marcel Ophüls's masterpiece is the four-and-a-half-hour *Le chagrin et la pitié* (*The Sorrow and the Pity*, 1971), a shattering documentary that mixes newsreel footage with contemporary interviews in an attempt to assess the impact of the Nazi Occupation on the provincial city of Clermont-Ferrand and, by extension, on the whole of France. The verdict is that, except for the systematic murder of Jews and of those non-Jews who openly opposed the Nazis, business went on very much as usual during the Occupation, largely because the Nazis obtained the cooperation of most of the French bourgeoisie and because the existence of a large, efficiently coordinated Resistance movement was a myth propagated after the war. Originally made for Swiss and West German television companies, *Le chagrin et la pitié* was not shown on French television (ORTF), a state monopoly, until 1981, but as a theatrical release in France and abroad it received much attention.

Ophüls's more recent films are *A Sense of Loss* (1972), which chronicles the plight of Northern Ireland, and *The Memory of Justice* (1976), a remarkable documentary meditation on collective guilt that counterposes the question of the Nazi death camps and the Nuremberg war-crimes trials with that of French atrocities in Algeria and American atrocities in Vietnam. The difficulties of trying to get the latter distributed against the wishes of myriad political censors and special interest groups led Ophüls to give up filmmaking for more than a decade and to turn to writing instead. In 1987, however, he renewed his filmic confrontation with history in *Hôtel Terminus: Klaus Barbie, His Life and Times*. Released at two hundred and sixty seven minutes in 1988, this film was shot on three continents and concluded with the unrepentant Nazi's widely publicized trial.

French Cinema in the 1980s and the 1990s

The 1980s and the 1990s witnessed the rise of several popular French film genres that have been influential abroad. The "heritage film" was a big-budget historical costume drama resonant of the postwar "tradition of quality," sometimes adapted from literature, that often privileged pictorialism and the visual arts. Examples are Claude Berri's (b. 1934) *Jean de Florette* (1986) and *Manon des sources* (*Manon of the Springs*, 1986), which derived from novels by Marcel Pagnol, and *Germinal* (1993), from a novel by Émile Zola; Bruno Nuytten's (b. 1945) *Camille Claudel* (1988), a biography of the mistress and most brilliant protégée of the sculptor



Isabelle Adjani and Dominique Blanc in *La reine Margot* (*Queen Margot*; Patrice Chéreau, 1994).

Auguste Rodin; Régis Wargnier's *Indochine* (1992), a romance set against the epic backdrop of French colonial imperialism in Vietnam; Patrice Chéreau's (b. 1944) *La reine Margot* (*Queen Margot*, 1994), a violent and sexually explicit epic of the events surrounding the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (which also inspired one of the stories in Griffith's *Intolerance* [1916]), adapted from a novel by Alexandre Dumas *père*; Jean-Paul Rappeneau's (b. 1932) *Le hussard sur le toit* (*The Horseman on the Roof*, 1995), based on Jean Giono's novel of post-Napoleonic Austria; and Patrice Leconte's (b. 1947) *Ridicule* (1996), a tale of intrigue in the court of Louis XIV, and *La veuve de Saint-Pierre* (*The Widow of Saint-Pierre*, 2000), an ironic romantic melodrama set on a remote island off the coast of Nova Scotia in 1849. Heritage productions are particularly apt to attract government subvention, consecrating, as they implicitly do, several different manifestations of French culture at once (e.g., French literature, history, art, and cinema).

Another popular film type of the era was known as *cinéma du look*—youth-oriented films with high production values and a flashy visual style ("le look") that often involved intertextual allusion, especially to the mise-en-scène of French poetic realism (1934–1940), and imagery borrowed from contemporary popular media. These films frequently featured eclectic sound tracks that were a pastiche of classical and popular music. *Cinéma du look* was inaugurated by Jean-Jacques Beineix (b. 1946) with the frenetic film noir *Diva* (1981) and extended through his *La lune dans le caniveau* (*Moon in the Gutter*, 1983) and *37°2 le matin* (also known as *Betty Blue*, 1986).

Luc Besson (b. 1959) was another early practitioner of *cinéma du look*. The commercial success of his hyperkinetic thrillers *Subway* (1985) and *Nikita* (also known as *La femme Nikita*, 1990) led him to production contracts with Columbia Pictures, the fruits of which were the brooding, desultory *Léon* (also known as *The Professional*, 1994) and the $90-million science-fiction blockbuster *Le cinquième élément* (*The Fifth Element*, 1997), whose computer-generated imagery (produced by Digital Domain) represented a landmark in the field of digital effects; the film lost about $30 million at the box office and sent Besson back to France, where he next directed the distinctively weird biopic *Jeanne d'Arc* (also known as *The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc*, 1999).

A third director associated with the neo-Baroque of *cinéma du look* was Leos Carax (b. Alex Dupont, 1960),



Juliette Binoche and Denis Lavant in *Les amants du Pont-Neuf* (*Lovers on the Bridge*; Leos Carax, 1991).

whose *Les amants du Pont-Neuf* (*Lovers on the Bridge*, 1991) represents the style at its most experimental, offering an exuberant vision of cinema as a riotous feast for the senses in its virtually plotless account of homeless, star-crossed lovers who seal their fate on the Pont-Neuf in Paris, which contains specific allusions to a host of New Wave precursors. *Les amants*, which took three years to complete, became the most expensive film produced in the country to date, when Carax built a full-scale replica of the bridge and its surroundings in the south of France—very much as the great art director Alexandre Trauner created elaborate studio-constructed cityscapes for the most prominent poetic realist films. The promise of *cinéma du look* continued in Carax's remarkable Expressionist fairy tale *Pola X* (1999), shot on location in Normandy and adapted from Herman Melville's *Pierre, or the Ambiguities* (for whose French title the film is an acronym).

A fourth figure whose early work can be categorized as *cinéma du look* is Jean-Pierre Jeunet (b. 1953), whose nightmarish farce *Delicatessen* (1991; co-directed with Marc Caro [b. 1956]) is a visually ornate inversion of the type of populist comedy practiced by René Clair in the early 1930s (e.g., *Le million*, 1931), in which the friendly neighborhood butcher is a cannibal. Originally working in animation, Jeunet and Caro next developed a grotesque, cartoonlike mise-en-scène for their dystopic adult fantasy *La cité des enfants perdus* (*The City of Lost Children*, 1995), whose commercial success was such that Jeunet was invited to Hollywood by 20th Century–Fox to direct *Alien: Resurrection* (1997), for which Caro served as design supervisor. Its surrealistic production design and evocative cinematography (by Darius Khondji) notwithstanding, this fourth installment in the *Alien* franchise lost $22 million against its $70 million investment, proving with some finality that *cinéma du look* did not travel well. Back in Paris, however, Jeunet produced the hit romantic comedy *Le fabuleux destin*

(right) Vincent Cassel in *La haine* (*Hate*; Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995).

d'Amélie Poulain (also known as *Amélie*, 2001), whose whimsical vision of life in the Montmartre district demonstrated a continuing flair for fantasy minus the usual darkness.

Other popular French genres are the *film policier* (or *polar*) and the *banlieue* film. The *polar*, whose origins reach back to the work of Henri-Georges Clouzot and Jean-Pierre Melville (and beyond that to the French obsession with Hitchcock), are Hollywood-inspired crime thrillers that tend to focus on police procedures and criminal detection. *Polars* were especially viable during the 1980s, when about 25 percent of domestic production was devoted to them. *Banlieue* films are a more recent form, focusing on neighborhoods and subcultures at the outskirts of large cities, usually working-class and often of North African, or Maghrebi, origin. (In this respect, they are closely related to *cinéma beur*—in which *beur* is a play on the French word *arabe*—films made by and for second-generation North African immigrants, focusing on their socioeconomic conditions and ethnicity; for example, Karim Dridi's *Bye-Bye* [1995].) An example of the *banlieue* film is Mathieu Kassovitz's *La haine* (*Hate*, 1995), winner of the Best Director Award at Cannes, which took a stark, black-and-white snapshot of the Parisian racial underclass in all of its alienation, hopelessness, and casual brutality.

It must finally be noted that French cinema during the 1990s was characterized by the emergence of what has been called the "New New Wave," whose directors are engaged with contemporary social issues that the original *nouvelle vague* more or less avoided in its preoccupation with form and style. Moreover, in sharp contrast to the calculated artificiality of *cinéma du look,* the New New Wave employs distinctive social and geographical settings and a naturalistic acting style that favors nonprofessional performers. Many of its filmmakers are women, highlighting the fact that during the 1980s and the 1990s, France had a higher percentage of practicing women directors than any other national cinema. For example, films by Catherine Breillat (b. 1948), Claire Denis (b. 1948), Virginie Despentes (b. 1969), and Coralie Trinh Thi (b. 1976) explore new territory in the realm of sexuality and gender roles, often with graphic realism.



Most New New Wave directors de-emphasize plot and strive for an openness of structure; furthermore, they are nonideological and draw most of their social consciousness from a personal experience of contemporary life. For example, Cédric Klapisch's (b. 1961) *Un air de famille* (English title: *Family Resemblances*, 1996) is a black comedy of dysfunctional family life. In *Métisse* (also known as *Café au lait*, 1993), Mathieu Kassovitz (b. 1967) practiced for *La haine* with a comedy about multicultural romance set in an ethnically diverse district of Paris, whereas his controversial *Assassins* (1997) was aimed squarely at the relationship between television violence and actual murder and seemed to prepare him for *Les rivières pourpres* (*Crimson Rivers*, 2000), a cerebral, if gruesome, polar that dissects the social fabric of a provincial university town.

Another New New Wave director is Arnaud Desplechin (b. 1960), whose work spans several genres—horror (*La sentinelle* [1992]), satiric comedy (*Comment je me suis disputé . . . ma vie sexuelle* [*My Sex Life, or How I Got into an Argument*, 1996]), and costume drama (*Esther Kahn* [2000])—but all of it rests on a foundation of acute social observation. Other filmmakers notable for their sharp commentary on France's urban social milieu are Christian Vincent (b. 1955) (*La séparation* [1994]) and Benoît Jacquot (b. 1947) (*L'école de la chair* [*The School of Flesh*, 1998]), both of whom tend to focus on contemporary sexual mores. Dealing with similar social concerns in northern industrial settings are several filmmakers whose work centers on the working class and is stylistically indebted to British directors such as Ken Loach and Mike Leigh.

For example, Erick Zonca's debut feature *La vie rêvée des anges* (*The Dreamlife of Angels*, 1998) examines the dilemma of untrained jobless women in a bleak factory town; similarly, Julie Lopes-Curval's *Bord de mer* (2002), which won the Caméra d'Or for Best First Film at Cannes, is about the daily lives of assembly-line workers in a small Atlantic seaside community.

The most prominent director working this vein, however, is clearly Bruno Dumont (b. 1958), whose first film, *La vie de Jésus* (1997), treats alienation



and gang violence among young men in an economically depressed rural town. Dumont's second feature, *L'humanité* (1999), which won multiple awards at Cannes, is set in the same town (Bailleul, near Flanders) and achieves an odd transcendence in recounting a simple police inspector's investigation of the brutal murder of an eleven-year-old girl.

Two other directors associated with the New New Wave but more eclectic in their styles are Olivier Assayas (b. 1955) and François Ozon (b. 1967). A former *Cahiers* critic and television screenwriter, Assayas debuted with *L'eau froide* (*Cold Water*, 1994), an impressively observed story of thwarted teenage love. Next, he contributed *Irma Vep*, a dark comedy about a failed director's attempt to remake Feuillade's popular serial *Les vampires* (1915), richly layered with filmic allusions, whose subtext is the imperiled status of French cinema in the face of globalization.

After the international success of *Irma Vep* and the tragic romance *Fin août, début septembre* (*Late August, Early September*, 1999), Assayas delivered a mainstream but highly stylized heritage film in *Les destinées sentimentales* (2000). This three-hour adaptation of Jacques Chardonne's multivolume epic novel on the rise and fall of a great mercantile family from the early 1900s through the end of World War II was heavily indebted to Luchino Visconti's *The Leopard* (1963) for its opulent production design.

Ozon began his career as a director of shorts, producing as his first feature an outrageous satire on bourgeois family life called *Sitcom* (1998), whose graphic depiction of sex and violence made him controversial overnight. His casually brutal *Les amants criminels* (*Criminal Lovers*, 1999) proceeded from a long line of fugitive-couple movies (e.g., Terrence Malick's *Badlands* [1973] and Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers* [1994]) but veered off into Grimm's fairy-tale territory in midcourse, confounding critics with its tonal shifts and generic hybridity. Yet *Sous le sable* (*Under the Sand*, 2000) demonstrated remarkable artistic restraint in its *Vertigo*-like drama of a middle-aged woman who refuses to acknowledge her beloved husband's death and continues to communicate with him (apparently) beyond the grave. Since this time, Ozon has continued to produce about one feature per year; most recently his *Jeune & Jolie* (*Young and Beautiful*, 2013) was nominated for the Palme d'Or at Cannes and widely praised by critics.

(left) Maggie Cheung in *Irma Vep* (Olivier Assayas, 1996).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, France had one of the most productive film industries in the world, both in absolute terms (it typically places third or fourth, after India, the United States, and sometimes the United Kingdom) and relative to the size of its population of 61 million; it produces around 180 features per year, as much as one-third of them by first- and second-time directors. (Italy and Spain, with nearly the same populations, produce 80 to 100.) What made this possible was an inordinately high level of government protectionism that is rationalized by a concept known as *l'exception culturelle française*, or the French cultural exception, which holds that cultural products are not merchandise subject to the same rules of free exchange as commodity goods.

In other words, French-language film and television, as well as books and music, are entitled to protection against stronger competitors such as the United States, in order to maintain the cultural distinctiveness of French society. (The "cultural exception" policy dates from 1993, when, at French insistence, the European Union successfully excluded cultural products from the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade [GATT].) To this end, the state heavily subsidizes production via the *avance sur recettes*, an advance from the government on all French films funded by a ticket tax and investment from French television companies that are mandated to devote 40 percent of their programming to domestic films. During the 1990s, 60 percent of all French films were at least partly financed by television, although most were released theatrically.

By far the most important player here is the national pay-television company Canal Plus, currently owned by Vivendi Universal, which options for broadcast 90 percent of all French films and invests more than $150 million annually in production—about one-third of total investment, making it the single largest underwriter of French cinema (until recently, causing it an operating loss of more than $300 million per year). This system of protection and subsidy has not only given France one of the largest film industries in the world, but it has made it the only European nation in which foreign films (overwhelmingly American) represent less than half of the domestic market. There is intense, ever-present competition from Hollywood, and American blockbusters are extremely popular with French audiences, who remain the most avid cinemagoers in all of Europe.

Yet as a legacy of the New Wave—itself part of a rich and distinguished national film heritage extending all the way back to Méliès—filmmaking in France is still



Charlotte Rampling in *Sous le sable* (*Under the Sand*; François Ozon, 2000).

regarded as more art than industry, and auteurism, as a matter of practice rather than theory, still reigns supreme. In fact, virtually all French directors still write or collaborate in the writing of their own screenplays, just as did the *cinéastes* of the *nouvelle vague*.

The Significance of the New Wave

The impact of the French New Wave upon world cinema would be difficult to overestimate. The movement can be credited with almost singlehandedly revitalizing the stagnant British and American cinemas during the 1960s, and it produced similar chain reactions in Italy, West Germany, Eastern Europe, and indeed around the world. To suggest that the New Wave was a monolithic phenomenon is simplistic. Varda, Resnais, Marker, and Malle, for example, evolved from a completely different context than did Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rivette, and Rohmer. The former had begun their filmmaking careers as assistants and editors within the established industry; the latter had begun theirs as theorists and critics in total revolt against the industrial system. And all of them, of course, went their separate artistic ways in the later 1960s and 1970s. But two common notions bound them together and made their films vastly important to the evolution of narrative cinema. First, they believed that film was an art form that could provide an artist with a medium of personal expression as rich, as varied, and as sensitive as any other. This assumption is implicit in the concept of personal authorship, or *la politique des auteurs*, according to which film directors are not simply analogous to writers of novels, but are literally capable of "writing novels" in the audiovisual language of film. Second, they shared the belief that the narrative conventions they had inherited from the 1930s and 1940s were insufficient to achieve these ends, that in fact many of these conventions prevented the audiovisual language of film from approaching its full range of expression. So they broke the old conventions and established new ones in the process, elaborating an audiovisual language that could express a whole gamut of internal and external states. This is implicit in the

notion of mise-en-scène, according to which a film should not be simply a succession of meaningful images telling a story, but an all-engrossing, mind- and sense-engaging experience. The number of major filmmakers who emerged from the New Wave and who are still in the process of making ever greater and more influential features is astounding. But even more astounding is the impact that these new ideas about audiovisual language and its operations have had and continue to have upon the international cinema at large. By calling into question the very form and process of narrative cinema, the filmmakers of the New Wave ensured that the cinema could never again rely on the easy narrative assumptions of its first fifty years.



Julie Christie in *Far from the Madding Crowd* (John Schlesinger, 1967).



14

New Cinemas in Britain and the English-Speaking Commonwealth

Great Britain

Postwar British Cinema and Its Context

While the French were experiencing the New Wave, the British were enjoying a film renaissance of their own. Before World War II, Britain had produced a vastly important contribution to documentary cinema in the government-funded work of John Grierson and his protégés, who were trained under Grierson in 1933 at the General Post Office (GPO) Film Unit, which had succeeded the Empire Marketing Board (EMB) Film Unit. It was renamed the Crown Film Unit in 1940 and became part of the Ministry of Information (MOI).

During the war, the Crown Film Unit moved toward a blending of narrative and documentary form. Since the innovations of the Brighton school at the turn of the century, however, Britain had produced little significant narrative cinema outside of the work of Alfred Hitchcock, the films directed or produced by Alexander Korda (1893–1956), and adaptations from the stage by Anthony Asquith (1902–1968). This surge of energy during the 1930s briefly freed the British industry from its perennial domination by Hollywood, but by the end of the decade,

most British commercial production was geared toward making second features to accompany American films on double bills.

Among the most important British films of the postwar era was a series of intelligent and witty comedies made for Michael Balcon's family-run Ealing Studios by directors Charles Crichton (1910–1999), Alexander Mackendrick (1912–1993), Henry Cornelius (1913–1958), and Robert Hamer (1911–1963). The splendid work of the actor Alec Guinness (1914–2000) in a number of these films made him an international star. The omnibus film *Dead of Night* (1945), co-directed by Alberto Cavalcanti, Robert Hamer, Charles Crichton, and Basil Dearden, is also a landmark of British postwar cinema because of its convincing mise-en-scène and circular narrative structure.

By the mid-1950s, British cinema had begun to decline into cliché, and Britain was once again in danger of becoming a Hollywood colony. The well-made, tightly budgeted genre films being turned out by Hammer Films were notable exceptions. This was a small independent production company founded in 1947 by James Carreras (1910–1990) and Anthony Hinds (1922–2013), who in 1951 had built soundstages on the grounds of a large country-estate house at Bray, near London. From 1954 to 1968, the Bray Studios produced a series of science fiction, crime, and horror films whose combination of violence, carnality, and visceral thrills made them very popular at home and abroad. Success came first with a trio of shocking alien-invasion films derived from a popular BBC television series written by Nigel Kneale, *The Quatermass Experiment* (1953). These films were shot in black and white and considered so gruesome that British censors gave them a "Certificate X" so that they would be off-limits to children.

Following this trend, Hammer broke into the Gothic horror market with *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), a widescreen Eastmancolor version of Mary Shelley's classic, whose shocks were quite literally visceral, because the mise-en-scène was strewn with organs and dismembered body parts. Produced for little



Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, and Robert Urquart in *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Terence Fisher, 1957).

more than $100,000 (£65,000), the film grossed well over $4 million (£2 million), half of it in the American market—unprecedented for a postwar British film of any sort. *The Curse of Frankenstein* was quickly followed by *Dracula* (U.S. title: *The Horror of Dracula*; Terence Fisher, 1958), and the two films together set the mold for what came to be known as "Hammer horror"—full-color, widescreen variants of Universal's horror classics from the 1930s, replete with violence, sex, and gore, but also graced with literate scripts (often written by Jimmy Sangster), imaginative art direction (usually by production designer Bernard Robinson), and cinematography (by director of photography [DP] Jack Asher), as well as professionally honed performances by Hammer's two male leads, Peter Cushing (1913–1994) and Christopher Lee (1922–2015), both Shakespearean-trained actors who were usually cast as antagonists.

The director most closely associated with Hammer horror was Terence Fisher (1904–1980), who in rapid succession made colorful versions of *The Mummy* (1959), *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1959), *The Two Faces of Dr. Jekyll* (1960), *The Curse of the Werewolf* (1961), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1962), as well as sequels to most of them (e.g., *The Revenge of Frankenstein* [1958] and *The Brides of Dracula* [1960]). During the next decade, Hammer produced five more Frankenstein sequels, six Dracula sequels, and nine other vampire films, together with two more Jekyll-and-Hyde films, and three mummy sequels. Predictably, British mainstream critics hated Hammer films, seeing them as prurient and sadistic, but nearly all of them were profitable.

The Hammer formula was so successful in the United States, in fact, that it was imitated at AIP by Roger Corman, whose stylized Edgar Allan Poe adaptations of the early 1960s were inspired by it. Hammer also had a decisive influence on the Italian horror film, which can be clearly seen in the work of Riccardo Freda and Mario Bava. After 1966, Hammer's fortunes began to decline because its formulas were getting tired and excess wasn't as shocking as it used to be, but not before it had demonstrated decisively the commercial viability of British films in the postwar world (in recognition of which the studio received the Queen's Award for Industry in 1968).

The Free Cinema Movement

As early as 1947, the Oxford University film journal *Sequence* (1947–1952), edited by the future directors Lindsay Anderson (1923–1994) and Karel Reisz (b. in Czechoslovakia, 1926–2002), had attacked the controlling assumption of British cinema: "The British commercial cinema has been a bourgeois rather than a revolutionary growth; and it is not a middle-class trait to examine oneself with the strictest objectivity, or to be able to represent higher or lower levels of society with sympathy and respect."

Anderson and Reisz went on to act upon their beliefs in 1954 and 1955 by organizing the **Free Cinema** movement, which, like Italian neorealism, celebrated, as a manifesto put it, "the importance of the individual and . . . the significance of the everyday." Similar to the French New Wave, the Free Cinema movement was dedicated to the belief that film should be a medium of personal expression for the filmmaker, who should be socially committed to illuminating the problems of contemporary life.

In practice, Free Cinema meant the production of short, low-budget documentaries such as Anderson's *O Dreamland* (1953), a satirical assault on the spiritual emptiness of working-class life, set in an amusement park; and Reisz's and Tony Richardson's *Momma Don't Allow* (1956), a study of postwar youth in the environment of a London jazz club. Between February 1956 and March 1959, the Free Cinema movement presented a series of six programs at the National Film Theatre. At the time that the Free Cinema movement emerged, a revolution was under way in British theater and literature, in which liberal working-class values emanating from the East End of London and the provinces were overturning the established bourgeois tradition of the preceding decades. John Osborne's antiestablishment diatribe *Look Back in Anger* rocked the world of traditional culture when it was staged at the Royal Court Theatre in May 1956 by calling into question the whole class structure of British society and assailing the moral bankruptcy of the welfare state.

The following years witnessed the appearance of a new group of young, antiestablishment, working-class novelists, such as David Storey, John Braine, Alan Sillitoe, and Shelagh Delaney, who treated similar themes in a style that can be accurately characterized as "social realism." By 1959—significantly, the year that the French New Wave won a great number of the prizes at Cannes—the time was ripe for the overthrow of the class-bound British feature cinema in favor of working-class social realism.

In that year, the industry itself produced two films that announced the revolution: Jack Clayton's (1921–1995) adaptation of John Braine's novel *Room at the Top* and Tony Richardson's adaptation of *Look Back in Anger*, scripted by the author. Both films were



(left) Albert Finney and Shirley Anne Field in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Karel Reisz, 1960).

big-budget commercial productions with well-known stars that nevertheless dealt seriously with the disillusionment and frustration of the British working classes, and both were international hits. *Look Back in Anger* was so successful, in fact, that Richardson (1928–1991) and Osborne (b. 1929) were able to form, with the financial backing of producer Harry Saltzman (later responsible for the slick James Bond series), their own production company, the short-lived but influential Woodfall Films (1959–1963).

In Woodfall's first feature, co-produced with Holly Films, Richardson collaborated with Osborne again to adapt his second play, *The Entertainer* (1960). It starred Laurence Olivier as the seedy music-hall comedian Archie Rice and was partly shot on location in Blackpool. Woodfall's first completely independent production, Karel Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), a version of the Alan Sillitoe novel, was shot on location in Nottingham with then unknown actors for a budget of under $300,000, or less than one-third of the standard feature allocation. Yet it recovered this figure in the first two weeks of its London run alone and went on to become the biggest international success the British film industry had known since the 1930s.

British "New Cinema," or Social Realism

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning became the prototype for what may be fairly labeled British "New Cinema," a social-realist film movement whose themes were borrowed from Italian neorealism and whose techniques were modeled on the Free Cinema documentary of the late 1950s and the films of the French New Wave. The New Cinema movement's films were generally set in the industrial Midlands and shot on location in black and white against the gloomiest backgrounds their makers could find. The films featured unknown young actors, and their protagonists were typically rebellious working-class youths, such as Richardson/Osborne's Jimmy Porter or Reisz/Sillitoe's Arthur Seaton—youths who were contemptuous of the spiritual torpor that had been induced in their parents and friends by the welfare state and by mass communications, as exemplified by the BBC. The films' heroes spend a good deal of their time in pubs, drinking and brawling, and use a tough vernacular speech until then unheard in British cinema.

Like the French New Wave, British New Cinema reached its peak around 1963 and then rapidly declined as a movement, while its directors went their separate ways. During the mid-1960s, in fact, a reaction to the bleakness of social realism set in, and the depressing images of the industrial Midlands were replaced by those of "swinging London" in big-budget widescreen color productions such as *Alfie* (Lewis Gilbert, 1966), *Smashing Time* (Desmond Davis, 1967), and *Joanna* (Michael Sarne, 1968), all of which, however, did have working-class protagonists. Nevertheless, Lindsay Anderson continued to pursue antiestablishment themes in *If*. . . (1968), a brilliant film about the nature of individualism and authority cast in the form of a surrealist satire on the British public school system. One of the 1960s' most important films, *If*. . . can be favorably compared with Vigo's *Zéro de conduite* (1933), to which it contains several explicit allusions; it established Anderson as the most influential figure to emerge from the New Cinema movement. In Anderson's powerful *O Lucky Man!* (1973), whose mock-poetic title refers back to his first film *O Dreamland* (1953), the protagonist of *If*. . . continues his education through the various levels of corruption in London society, only to be totally corrupted himself at the end of the process—by being "discovered" by the director Lindsay Anderson to star in a motion picture titled *O Lucky Man!*

After an impressive start in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, the work of Karel Reisz generally declined during the 1960s (e.g., *Isadora*, 1968), with the exception of *Morgan* (1966; also known as *Morgan: A Suitable Case for Treatment*), a subtle and painfully funny film about mental breakdown. Yet Reisz's intelligent, American-made *The Gambler* (1974) signaled renewed vigor. His second American feature, *Who'll Stop the Rain?* (1978), a corrosive adaptation of Robert Stone's best-selling allegorical thriller *Dog Soldiers*, about heroin smuggling during the Vietnam War, marked his return to prominence. His version of John Fowles's complex Victorian novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1981), scripted by Harold Pinter and strikingly photographed by Freddie Francis, was a triumph of the filmmaker's art. (It should be noted that his important book *The Technique of Film Editing* greatly influenced such major film artists as Alain Resnais.)

The same general falling-off was seen in the work of Tony Richardson (1928–1991), who, after a series of three excellent working-class films and the flamboyant period comedy *Tom Jones* (1963; adapted from Henry



Chaotic violence at the conclusion of *If . . .* (Lindsay Anderson, 1968).

Fielding's novel), abandoned social commitment for big-time commercial cinema. Since then, most of his films, except for the American-made *The Loved One* (1965), were failures.

John Schlesinger (1926–2003), who began his career as a BBC documentarist, was much more successful artistically than either Reisz or Richardson. He made his first feature, *A Kind of Loving*, in 1962. After *Billy Liar* (1963), he achieved great commercial success with *Darling* (1965), a modish examination of upper-class decadence filmed *à la nouvelle vague*, for which Julie Christie won the 1965 Academy Award for Best Actress (the film also won for Best Costume Design [Julie Harris] and Best Screenplay [Frederic Raphael]). Schlesinger's best film of the decade, however, was *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1967), shot on location in Dorset and Wiltshire by Nicolas Roeg with exceptional painterly skill. This big-budget ($4 million) adaptation of a novel first published by Thomas Hardy in 1876 is astonishingly faithful to both the artistic vision of its source and the cinematic spirit of its times. With *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) and throughout the 1970s, Schlesinger continued to specialize in stylish and intelligent films—*Sunday, Bloody Sunday* (1971), *The Day of the Locust* (1975; from the novel by Nathanael West), *Marathon Man* (1976), and *Yanks* (1979).

Jack Clayton, whose *Room at the Top* (1959) is often credited with having begun British social realism, turned away from the movement in his second feature, *The Innocents* (1961), a beautiful, terrifying, and appropriately ambiguous visualization of Henry James's novel *The Turn of the Screw*. Yet Clayton continued to make distinctly individual films, such as *The Pumpkin Eater* (1964; script by Harold Pinter) and *Our Mother's House* (1967). Clayton's career as a director was nearly ended by the commercial and critical failure of his opulent, Hollywood-produced version of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1974), but resumed with his skillful adaptation of Ray Bradbury's horror novel *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1983). Other important British filmmakers of the 1960s were Bryan Forbes (1926–2013) and Basil Dearden (1911–1971).

During the same years, the television director Peter Watkins (b. 1935) made two brilliant pseudo-documentary films for the BBC—*Culloden* (1964), a historical re-creation of the bloody suppression of the 1746 Jacobite rebellion, and *The War Game* (1965), a projection of what would happen to Britain in the aftermath



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[1] Julie Christie in *Far from the Madding Crowd* (John Schlesinger, 1967). [2] Peter Wyngarde and Deborah Kerr in *The Innocents* (Jack Clayton, 1961).

of a nuclear attack. The BBC refused to broadcast *The War Game*, and it was banned from television internationally for the next twenty years. Watkins's first theatrical feature, *Privilege* (1967), offered a strikingly original vision of England as a totalitarian state but could not be compared with his television work. His more sophisticated *Punishment Park* (1971) depicted a fascist America in the wake of the Vietnam War. And his *Edvard Munch* (1974) used documentary techniques to dramatize the life, milieu, and creative agonies of the Norwegian Expressionist painter.

British cinema was further enhanced in the 1960s and the 1970s by the presence of two American expatriates, Joseph Losey (1909–1984) and Richard Lester (b. 1932). Losey, who became a British citizen after being hounded out of Hollywood during the McCarthy era, produced some of the most significant British films of the decade, in collaboration with absurdist playwright Harold Pinter (b. 1930). These included *The Servant* (1963), *Accident* (1967), and *The Go-Between* (1971), adapted from the novel by L. P. Hartley. A subtle stylist whose main themes are the destructiveness of the erotic impulse and the corrupting nature of technocracy, Losey also produced such important work as *Eva* (also known as *Eve*, 1962), a decadent melodrama about a phony novelist's attraction toward an archetypal femme fatale, shot on location in Rome and Venice by two of the world's then greatest cinematographers, Henri Decaë and Gianni Di Venanzo; and the remarkable antiwar drama *King and Country* (1964), set in the trenches of World War I, which features superb performances by two iconic actors of British New Cinema, Tom Courtenay and Dirk Bogarde.

Richard Lester directed several award-winning shorts before he came to fame and fortune through his two Beatles films, *A Hard Day's Night* (1964) and *Help!* (1965), which employ the full cinematic arsenal of the New Wave—telephoto zooms and swoops, flashbacks, jump cuts, and every conceivable device of narrative displacement—to create a dazzling new kind of audiovisual comedy.

The End of Social Realism and Beyond

In the late 1960s, with the decline of social realism and the increasing influence of American investment in the now lucrative British cinema, the distinctly national flavor of British films was lost. Many American directors (such as Billy Wilder, Richard Fleischer, Sidney Lumet, Delbert Mann, Stanley Donen, George Stevens, Otto Preminger, Anthony Mann, Richard Brooks, William Wyler, Fred Zinnemann, John Huston, and Stanley Kubrick) came to work in British studios during these years, as did such major Continental figures as Roman Polanski (*Repulsion* [1965], *Cul-de-sac* [1966]), François Truffaut (*Fahrenheit 451* [1966]), and Michelangelo Antonioni (*Blow-Up* [1966]). Furthermore, the British-based directors Richardson, Lester, and Schlesinger, as well as David Lean (*The Bridge on the River Kwai* [1957], *Lawrence of Arabia* [1962], *Dr. Zhivago* [1965], *Ryan's Daughter* [1970]) and Carol Reed (*The Agony and the Ecstasy* [1965], *Oliver!* [1968], *Flap* [1970]), all began to make films within the American industry. And Reisz (*Isadora* [1968]) and Forbes (*The Madwoman of Chaillot* [1969]) both became involved in big-budget international co-productions.

Nevertheless, in the late 1960s a new, more visually oriented generation of British directors began to appear. Some, such as Clive Donner (b. 1926) and Hungarian-born Peter Medak (b. 1937), produced a handful of interesting films before going heavily commercial. Others, such as the former television directors Alan Bridges (1927–2013) and Ken Loach (b. 1936), sacrificed popularity to integrity, with the austerely analytical work of Loach proving especially influential.

Loach, who is often labeled a social realist, worked only sporadically during the 1980s (as did many left-wing critics of Thatcherism) but experienced a genuine renewal in the 1990s, first with the documentary-like political thriller *Hidden Agenda* (1990). This film, which is set against the backdrop of war-torn Northern Ireland, won the 1990 Jury Prize at Cannes, and it was followed by *Riff Raff* (1991) and *Raining Stones* (1993), both of them more humorous treatments of working-class strife, which also won awards at Cannes (the 1991 International Critics Prize and the 1993 Jury Prize, respectively). Loach's social commitment remained on dramatic display through the end of the century. In 2006, his account of the struggle for Irish independence, *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, won the Palme d'Or at Cannes.

Perhaps the most significant directors of this generation, however, managed to combine both impulses in films that were commercially viable and at the same time formally significant. Peter Yates (1929–2011), a director known for his ability to combine action with an intelligent exploration of character, worked in America since the success of *Bullitt* in 1968, but he returned to British themes with *The Dresser* (1983),



Nicol Williamson and Helen Mirren in *Excalibur* (John Boorman, 1981).

a film about the last performance of an aging provincial actor. John Boorman (b. 1933) also scored his first successes in the United States with *Point Blank* (1967), *Hell in the Pacific* (1969), and *Deliverance* (1972), returning briefly to England to make *Leo the Last* (1970), a contemporary revolutionary allegory for which he won the Director's Prize at Cannes. Shooting on location in Ireland, he confirmed his taste for esoteric subjects in the mythical science-fiction epic *Zardoz* (1974), which he also wrote and produced, and once more in the disappointing *Exorcist II—The Heretic* (1977), shot in the United States.

Next, however, Boorman produced an authentically British masterpiece, *Excalibur* (1981), also shot in Ireland, an intellectually and visually powerful retelling of the Arthurian legend from the mystical perspective of Merlin. This ambitious project was followed by his most exotic work, *The Emerald Forest* (1985), which concerns the young son of an American engineer (played by Boorman's own son, Charley) raised by a primitive Amazonian tribe, and the murderous clash of cultures that ensues when his father attempts to "rescue" him. In an unpredictable change of pace, Boorman delighted 1987 audiences with *Hope and Glory*, a richly detailed account of English middle-class family life during World War II that was derived from his own childhood experience. He has continued to write, produce, and direct fine work, as is evidenced by *The Tailor of Panama* (2001).

The two most original British directors of the 1970s were undeniably Ken Russell and Nicolas Roeg. Russell (1927–2011) first attracted attention in the mid-1960s with a series of fictionalized biographies of composers, dancers, and poets, flamboyantly directed for BBC-TV. International recognition came with his lavish theatrical adaptation of D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* (1969). This was followed by a series of controversial features—which oscillated between the outrageously vulgar and the outrageously brilliant. The same atmosphere characterized his rigorous adaptation of Oscar Wilde's

banned symbolist drama *Salome* (1891), titled *Salome's Last Dance* (1988). The film was brilliantly conceived by Russell in the form of a private homoerotic performance staged for the author in a London brothel on the eve of his fateful arrest for sodomy.

Equally inspired are *The Lair of the White Worm* (1988), a hilarious send-up of British class values, kinky sex, and 1960s Hammer horror films, freely adapted by Russell from Bram Stoker's last novel (1911), and a lushly romantic adaptation of *The Rainbow* (1989), Lawrence's novelistic "prequel" to *Women in Love*. *Whore* (1991) was less successful in its first-person account of the life of a London streetwalker, as manically depicted by Theresa Russell. Until his death in 2011, Russell directed mainly for television, where his talent for making the most of small budgets was keenly appreciated.

Less flamboyant than Russell, but quite as unique, Nicolas Roeg (b. 1928) began his career as a cinematographer for Lester, Schlesinger, Truffaut, and others before co-directing *Performance* (1968; released 1970) with Donald Cammell. Like his other films of the decade—*Walkabout* (1971), *Don't Look Now* (1973), *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976), and *Bad Timing* (1979)—it was cut by distributors to make it more accessible to the public and exists in several versions. Often experimental in form, Roeg's beautiful and enigmatic films go far beyond narrative to immerse the viewer in a fluent stream of audiovisual images whose most legitimate meaning is their psychological affect.

After Russell and Roeg, the most influential British director of the period was probably Ridley Scott (b. 1937), a former set designer and television-commercial director whose first feature, *The Duellists* (1977), adapted from a short story by Joseph Conrad, won high praise at Cannes in the year of its release. Scott's next film was the smash hit *Alien* (1979), made for 20th Century–Fox in the United States and hailed as a minor masterpiece of science fiction and visceral horror. He mixed science fiction and film noir with the same effectiveness in the technically dazzling *Blade Runner* (1982), based on Philip K. Dick's 1968 genre classic *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Yet his British-produced fantasy *Legend* (1985) was a critical failure, and for its 1986 release in the United States it was cut by twenty minutes.



Nevertheless, Scott's modish thriller *Someone to Watch over Me* (1987) was among the most successful entries in the film noir cycle of the late 1980s, and *Black Rain* (1989) was a complex fusion of American police thriller and Japanese *yakuza* film shot on location in Osaka that commented reflexively on the growing influence of the Japanese in U.S. corporate life. Scott began the 1990s by producing an artistically successful but socially ambiguous essay in pop feminism in *Thelma & Louise* (1991). Although his work sometimes lacks narrative cohesion, on a purely visual (and visceral) level Scott remains one of the most engaging filmmakers working in the Anglo-American industry today, as demonstrated by his award-winning *Gladiator* (2000), *Black Hawk Down* (2001), *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005), and his breakthrough 3-D productions of *Prometheus* (2012) and *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014).

Scott is one of several directors who came to work in the American film industry in the late 1970s from British "new wave" television advertising and documentary. The most consistently successful has been Alan Parker (b. 1944), whose first feature, *Bugsy Malone* (1976), a musical spoof of gangster films using an all-child cast, was followed by the harrowing *Midnight Express* (1978), which won Academy Awards for its screenplay (Oliver Stone) and score (Giorgio Moroder). Parker scored another solid box-office and critical hit with *Evita* (1996), a lavish musical biography of Argentine folk hero Eva Perón, adapted from Andrew Lloyd Webber's stage hit, written and produced by Parker, and photographed by the masterful Iranian-born cinematographer Darius Khondji (b. 1955). Parker's adaptation of *Angela's Ashes* (1999), Frank McCourt's Pulitzer Prize–winning memoir of growing up poor in Limerick, Ireland, was considerably grimmer and lost money accordingly.

The prolific Michael Apted (b. 1941) began as a director of documentaries for BBC television and in the mid-1970s started making features for David Puttman's Goldcrest Company. He scored his first American success with *Coal Miner's Daughter* (1980), a socially conscious biography of country music star Loretta Lynn, for which Sissy Spacek won the Academy Award for Best Actress. Apted followed with *Gorky Park* (1983), a version of Martin Cruz Smith's best-selling police thriller set in pre-glasnost Moscow. Many of Apted's later features took a similar form—that of the carefully observed commercial thriller. He also made successful comedies and prestige productions such as *Gorillas in the Mist* (1988), the life story of the murdered anthropologist Dian Fossey. But Apted's commitment to documentary form and ethnographic method is long and deep. In 1963, he began filming The Up series about the lives of fourteen seven-year-olds from all strata of London society, which reassembled them for continuing interviews every seven years. So far, he has completed *7 Plus Seven* (1970), *21 Up* (1977), *28 Up* (1984), *35 Up* (1991), *42 Up* (1998), *49 Up* (2005), and *56 Up* (2012). Apted is also known for *Thunderheart* (1992), a fictionalized account of the Wounded Knee incident of 1973, which he had previously recounted in his documentary *Incident at Oglala* (1992).

(left) Sean Young in *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982).

Adrian Lyne (b. 1941), like Alan Parker, began his career directing television commercials and in his first features adopted the form of music video, so that *Foxes* (1980) and *Flashdance* (1983) looked as if they might have been made for MTV. He developed a reputation for stylish eroticism in the wake of *9½ Weeks* (1986), which was released in both R-rated and unrated versions. In the same vein, Lyne produced *Fatal Attraction* (1987), which became the third-highest-grossing film of the year with its stylish, high-energy tale of a weekend fling gone wrong. (Like *9½ Weeks*, *Fatal Attraction* was released in two versions—one with a happy ending tacked on after principal photography to satisfy the desire of preview audiences, and the other with the original, downbeat ending for release on video.)

Yet Lyne's most important work to date is unquestionably *Jacob's Ladder* (1990), in which a troubled Vietnam War veteran (brilliantly portrayed by Tim Robbins) tries to come to terms with a nightmarish, but seemingly irretrievable, battlefield memory. The film is masterfully directed in a way that combines acute social observation with arresting visuals and supernatural horror. Also notable was Lyne's faithful adaptation of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1997), which accurately cast a minor (Dominque Swain) in the title role and thus had trouble finding American distribution.

Tony Scott (1944–2012), Ridley's younger brother, entered features with the graphically erotic vampire film *The Hunger* (1983), which proved his ability to manufacture slick, attention-getting images. Tony then teamed up with blockbuster producers Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer to make what became the highest-grossing film of 1986 and the second-highest-grossing film of 1987, *Top Gun* and *Beverly Hills Cop II*, respectively. After *Top Gun*, it was difficult for Scott to break out of the military mold, and some of his most successful features either reworked the plot elements of that film in other



John Cleese and Eric Idle in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones, 1975).

terms or had similar military settings and themes. Scott continued to work with Bruckheimer after Simpson died in 1996, and he moved increasingly into the role of executive producer himself via his own company, Scott Free Productions, until his suicide in 2012.

Another source of vitality in British cinema was the work of the multitalented comedy team Monty Python—essentially, the performers John Cleese (b. 1939), Michael Palin (b. 1943), Eric Idle (b. 1943), and Graham Chapman (1941–1989); writer-director Terry Jones (b. 1942); and American-born animator-director Terry Gilliam (b. 1940). Their first film, *And Now for Something Completely Different* (Gilliam and Ian McNaughton, 1971), was merely a collection of sketches derived from their popular BBC-TV series *Monty Python's Flying Circus,* but *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (Jones and Gilliam, 1975) was a wholly original parody of the Arthurian romance that also managed to convey the look and feel of the Middle Ages in a convincing way. The same was true of Gilliam's version of Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky* (1977) and, in biblical terms, of Jones's irreverent and controversial *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (1979), which was the first production of the independent company Handmade Films.

Handmade, whose chairman was ex-Beatle George Harrison (1943–2001), was later responsible for Gilliam's *Time Bandits* (1981), a bizarre fantasy in which six dwarfs romp through history. Terry Gilliam went on to direct for Handmade the darkly brilliant *Brazil* (1985), which posits an alternately absurd and terrifying dystopia in Britain's near future; and for Columbia, the phantasmagorical *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1989), a dazzling if somewhat empty display of pyrotechnics rumored to have cost more than $50 million, but whose actual costs were probably closer to $40 million. Gilliam continued to direct occasional features through 2013 but has long since fallen out of critical favor.

In the realm of the narrative avant-garde, several British filmmakers became prominent during the 1980s, most notably Peter Greenaway (b. 1943), whose early structural films *A Walk through H* (1978) and *Vertical Features Remake* (1978), three-hour absurdist fantasia *The Falls* (1980), and enigmatic medium-budget feature *The Draughtsman's Contract*

(1982) won the support of the British Film Institute (BFI) and Channel 4. Set in an English country house in 1694, *The Draughtsman's Contract* is a densely allusive work about the relationships among artists, patrons, and spectators, cast in the form of a metaphysical murder mystery. In 1984, Greenaway, whose regular cinematographer was Sacha Vierny (1919–2001), directed a pair of documentaries profiling American avant-garde composers (*Modern American Composers I* and *II*).

He returned to feature work with the uncompromisingly intellectual *A Zed and Two Noughts* (1985), or "Z-O-O," which is about twin zoologists who become obsessed with the process of postmortem decay, various aspects of which they record using time-lapse photography, and the display of which comprises a significant portion of the film. Since that time, Greenaway has increasingly made use of electronic paintbox programs to integrate his photographic material with new layers of digital imagery.

A former painter and set designer for Ken Russell, Derek Jarman (1942–1994) burst onto the avant-garde scene with *Sebastiane* (1976), a profane, homoerotic account of the famous saint and martyr that was performed in Latin, with English subtitles and a Brian Eno score. *Jubilee* (1977) offered a vision of anarchic social breakdown to mark both the royal Jubilee and Britain's "Summer of Punk." Jarman's version of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1979), shot in the fire-gutted ruins of a Warwickshire estate, was an overwhelming critical success. The same was true of his richly imagined biography *Caravaggio* (1986), which re-created Renaissance Italy on the London docks to project the life of the influential painter (1573–1610) who, among his other achievements, is said to have invented chiaroscuro lighting.

Much of the work discussed above was financed, in various combinations, by producer David Puttnam (b. 1941), the British film and television investment company Goldcrest, and the independent television network Channel 4. Puttnam produced early films by Ken Russell, Alan Parker, Michael Apted, Ridley Scott, and Adrian Lyne before producing an international hit, the Oscar-winning *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981). Subsequently, he produced Bill Forsyth's Scottish-American comedy *Local Hero* (1983), the Irish-based *Cal* (Pat O'Connor, 1984), and for his Enigma Company, *The Killing Fields* (Roland Joffe, 1984) and *The Mission* (Roland Joffe, 1986). Both of the latter films received Academy Awards for Chris Menges's cinematography, and *The Mission* also won the Palme d'Or at Cannes; they brought Puttnam to the attention of Columbia Pictures Industries Inc., where he served a brief term as chairman from 1986 to 1987, before returning to England.

Launched in 1980 to provide alternative programming, Channel 4 became the fourth-largest national television network in Britain, after the two BBC services and the advertiser-supported Independent Television (ITV). Unlike the other networks, however, Channel 4 produces no programs of its own but commissions production companies for original work. In this way, it provided funding for several important low- and medium-budget features, such as Jerzy Skolimowski's *Moonlighting* (1982), Peter Greenaway's *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982), Neil Jordan's *Angel* (Ireland; 1982), Stephen Frears's *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), James Ivory and Ishmail Merchant's *A Room with a View* (1986), and Alex Cox's *Sid and Nancy* (1986), giving the lie to Alison Pearson's axiom that "the British make great television and lousy films" by combining the best attributes of both. In the late 1980s, Channel 4 was the single largest producer of independent features in England and a major force in the cultural life of the nation, functioning on a par with West Germany's ZDF and Italy's RAI.

Like the French New Wave, from which it partially sprang, British social-realist cinema disappeared along with the social context that had motivated it. Yet its formal and thematic legacy to British national cinema was great. It bequeathed the then radical stylistic conventions of the New Wave to a cinema stagnant with armchair narrative traditions carried over from the prewar era. And in its new concern for the aesthetics of everyday life and outspokenness about the dynamics of sex, class, and power in the postindustrial world, it gave the class-ridden, hidebound British film a vastly wider range of themes than it had ever known before. Social realism also produced a handful of important directors, such as Lindsay Anderson, John Schlesinger, Tony Richardson, and Karel Reisz, and a new pool of international acting talent, including young and previously unknown stars such as Albert Finney, Rita Tushingham, Rachel Roberts, Alan Bates, Tom Courtenay, Susannah York, Richard Harris, Oliver Reed, Michael Caine, David Warner, Julie Christie, Glenda Jackson, James Fox, Terence Stamp, David Hemmings, Michael York, Vanessa Redgrave, and Lynn Redgrave.

The fact that British film has rarely been a major force in world cinema is partly explained by America's domination of the English-language film market, and partly by the innate conservatism of British visual and aural culture. Satyajit Ray once said that the British are "temperamentally unsuited" to cinema, and


SEE WHAT YOU'RE MISSING
"OBNOXIOUS"
"FILTHY LUCRE"
"POLICE SWOOP ON PUNK DISC SHOPS"
"Fired Again"
TWO FILMS
"Foul Mouthed Yobs"
Sex Pi
EVER MIND
Sex Pistols
"OBSCENE
ILL PLAY

François Truffaut claimed that the terms *cinema* and *Britain* were incompatible. As if to confirm this, the preponderance of successful British films in the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries fall into a culturally conservative genre known as "heritage cinema," whose origins can be traced back to the patriotic *Chariots of Fire* (1981). These are essentially period or costume dramas, which include adaptations from canonical works of national literature—in which the British are exceedingly rich—as well as historical reconstructions based on modern texts. Most heritage films have conventionally structured narratives and conservative social attitudes as correlatives to their obsession with costume and decor. In their heavy reliance on mise-en-scène, their pictorialist camera style, and their fetishization of accurate period detail, heritage films can be best described as having a "museum aesthetic." While the British seem to have invented the genre in its current form, it has an obvious precedent in the early German *Kostümfilm* as well as in Hungarian director Alexander Korda's London Film costume spectacles, and it exists today in all the cinemas of Europe (very prominently, for example, in France), where it is culturally aligned with a kind of post–Cold War retro nationalism.

Despite this conservatism, the spirit of New Cinema lived on in the work of a handful of directors who did their apprentice work under its major figures. Sometimes called "four Mikes and a Michael" (after *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, a popular film directed by one of them), Mike Figgis, Mike Leigh, Mike Hodges, Mike Newell, and Michael Radford have all made important contributions to Anglo-American cinema. Most of them started out working in television and later found their way into film. Figgis (b. 1948) was trained as a musician, and he writes the scores for most of his films. Although he has compiled a number of commercial hits, Figgis's artistic commitment to the experimental extends throughout his career—from the mood-drenched *Liebestraum* (1991) to his Super 16mm adaptation of August Strindberg's Expressionist play *Miss Julie* (1999) to his digital video jigsaw puzzle *Timecode* (2000), in which four separate continuous story elements, shot with four separate cameras, run simultaneously on-screen throughout the entire film.

Mike Leigh (b. 1943), who is often compared (invidiously, he believes) to Ken Loach, harks back to the "kitchen sink" realism of early New Cinema, although he has no specific ideological point of view. Because he was trained in the theater, Leigh's films have tended to focus on the inherent absurdity of everyday life, and his working methods valorize performance and improvisation over tightly organized scripts (although he rehearses from screenplays that he writes himself). Leigh was recognized as a major talent when *Naked* (1993), which follows the aimless wanderings of a young drifter (David Thewlis) through post-Thatcherite London, won the Best Director's Prize at Cannes and Thewlis won Best Actor.

(left) Chloe Webb and Gary Oldman in *Sid and Nancy* (Alex Cox, 1986).

As with *Naked,* the key performances in the family melodrama *Secrets & Lies* (1996) were largely improvised, and the film won a host of international awards. Leigh turned away from intimate character study in the buoyant *Topsy-Turvy* (1999), a biography of the comic-opera composers W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, whose work was phenomenally popular with middle-class audiences in late Victorian London. Leigh has continued to direct features, most notably the multiple-award-winning *Vera Drake* (2004), about a working-class woman in London in 1950 who is jailed for performing illegal abortions, and *Another Year* (2010), which depicts the declining relationship of an aging middle-class couple.

Like Figgis, Mike Newell (b. 1942) started in television, and he has since had a prolific career directing features in many genres but always with an edge of social commentary or moral probing. His most important film of the 1980s was *Dance with a Stranger* (1985), the story of the last woman to be executed in England (for murdering her upper-class lover), which contains a deft analysis of Britain's rigid caste system and the self-destructive power of obsessive love. During the 1990s, Newell became associated with romantic comedy through the success of *Enchanted April* (1992) and *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994); the latter had the dual distinction of introducing Hugh Grant (b. 1960) and becoming the most successful British film of all time, earning $244 million worldwide against a $6 million budget.

Mike Hodges (b. 1932) had a career as a writer, a producer, and a director for BBC-TV before making his first feature, *Get Carter* (1971), an ultraviolent gangster film starring Michael Caine, now considered to be one of the genre's best. Hodges acquired a reputation for making tough genre thrillers in the 1970s (e.g., *The Terminal Man*, 1974) and then directed the campily hilarious *Flash Gordon* for Dino De Laurentiis in 1980. Scored with original rock music by Queen, this big-budget send-up of B-movie serials of the 1930s brought a colorful comic-strip aesthetic to the screen, complete



Hugh Grant and Charlotte Coleman in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994).

with comic-book grammar and syntax, in a way that cannily anticipates later films such as *Batman* (Tim Burton, 1989).

Michael Radford (b. 1950) worked as a documentary filmmaker until 1983, when he directed *Another Time, Another Place*, a drama of wartime romance set in the Scottish Highlands. He followed this with an adaptation of George Orwell's *1984* (1984), which was Richard Burton's last film. Radford's greatest success came with *Il postino* (*The Postman*, 1994), a film about the relationship between the exiled Chilean Nobel Prize–winning poet Pablo Neruda (Philippe Noiret) and his postman (Massimo Troisi, who died of heart failure on the last day of the shoot), which takes place on a small island off the coast of Italy in the 1950s. The film, a remake of *Ardiente paciencia* (*Burning Patience*, 1983) by the Portuguese director Antonio Skármeta, was nominated for an American Academy Award for Best Picture in 1995, the first time that a foreign film had received such honor since Ingmar Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* in 1973 (and, like Bergman's film, *Il postino* did not win). Radford continues to direct an occasional feature, for example, *Dancing at the Blue Iguana* (2000), always with the studied eye of a documentarian.

Stephen Frears (b. 1941) came into the film industry as an assistant to Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz, for whom he worked until he directed his first feature, *Gumshoe* (1971), an homage to hard-boiled detective movies such as *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941) and *The Big Sleep* (Howard Hawks, 1946), containing resonances of both. In 1972, he joined BBC-TV and spent twelve years directing a series of impressive telefilms before making his next feature, *The Hit* (1984), a psychological thriller about two killers sent to Spain to murder a former associate.

Then Frears directed *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), from a script by the Anglo-Pakistani novelist and playwright Hanif Kureishi (b. 1954), which became one of the defining documents of 1980s British cinema and urban life under the conservative government of Margaret Thatcher. This modestly budgeted film, shot in 16mm and blown up to 35mm for theatrical distribution, stars Daniel Day-Lewis (b. 1957) as a racist youth from an East London slum who falls unexpectedly in love with a male Pakistani launderette owner. An understated blend of ironic comedy and cultural politics, *My Beautiful Laundrette* was a surprise hit, bringing critical acclaim to Frears and Kureishi (who won several awards for the screenplay) and stardom to Day-Lewis.

Next, Frears completed the long-cherished project *Prick Up Your Ears* (1987), scripted by Alan Bennett, from John Lahr's biography of murdered gay playwright Joe Orton (1933–1967), which gave Gary Oldman (b. 1958) his first starring role. Coming on the heels of these two oblique satires on British hypocrisy was a frontal assault on Thatcher's England that bordered on the polemical—*Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), also scripted by Kureishi. Then Frears was tapped by Hollywood to direct a big-budget version of Christopher Hampton's play *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988). A film of uncharacteristic opulence and literate ensemble performances, *Dangerous Liaisons* won three Oscars (Screenplay, Art Direction, and Costumes) and set Frears up to make *The Grifters* (1990), a down-and-dirty version of Jim Thompson's pulp thriller and his last film to find a popular audience before his much admired *The Queen* (2006) and *Philomena* (2013).

Terence Davies (b. 1945) is a much more personal filmmaker than the other directors discussed in this section. He began his career with three black-and-white shorts produced under a grant from the BFI, an autobiographical trilogy—*Children*, *Madonna and Child*, and *Death and Transfiguration*—which together present a decidedly gloomy view of working-class family life, fraught with starkly religious imagery. In his first feature, *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (1988), also BFI-produced, Davies elaborated on his earlier portrait of a dysfunctional family dominated by an abusive father, this time in color, which he used to create an ironic contrast between upbeat images of 1950s prosperity and the grim reality of his subject. The story continued in *The Long Day Closes* (1992), a series of nostalgic, impressionistic sketches of a twelve-year-old boy's

coming of age in 1956 Liverpool, shot in sepia-toned color and layered with references to movies and other popular media.

Davies's biggest projects to date were an adaptation of Edith Wharton's novel *The House of Mirth* (2000), set in early-twentieth-century New York, London, and Venice, which Davies re-created with a remarkable economy of means, including the strategic use of CGI to enhance exterior backgrounds and lighting effects; and *Of Time and the City* (2008), a collage documentary about growing up in working-class Liverpool in the 1950s and the 1960s. Davies is exemplary of the way in which the British Film Institute has encouraged artistic production through public funding. From small, intensely personal work, Davies has worked his way up to medium-budget, full-resource filmmaking. Furthermore, the autobiographical film of working-class family life that he pioneered—together with Ken Loach, it must be said, who preceded him—has become a British subgenre.

Neil Jordan (b. 1950) is Ireland's most prominent director. He was already a successful novelist and short-story writer when he began working as a script consultant on John Boorman's *Excalibur* (1981). Boorman subsequently founded the Motion Picture Company of Ireland to produce low-budget films, and its first production was Neil Jordan's crime thriller *Angel* (U.S. title: *Danny Boy,* 1982), which was also the first film to receive a grant from the newly established Irish Film Board. Jordan's breakthrough film was *Mona Lisa* (1986), directed from his own script, about the relationship between a high-class call girl and her gangland chauffeur, played by Bob Hoskins (1942–2014), in a performance that brought him multiple critical awards.

Jordan's next film was *The Crying Game* (1992), a psychological thriller that became his ticket to Hollywood when it unexpectedly became a smash hit. Owing in part to a marketing campaign that emphasized the film's "secret" (that, unbeknownst to him, a character's girlfriend is actually a man), *The Crying Game* grossed $62.5 million worldwide and won an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay (for Jordan). After *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), Jordan continued to write, direct, and often produce his own films (e.g., *The Butcher Boy*, 1997), until he made the vampire thriller *Byzantium* (2012) for Studio Canal from an original screenplay by Moira Buffini.

The independent producer Bill Cartlidge once said that the British film industry is "permanently ill, but goes into remission now and then," and the late 1990s was clearly one of those times. In 1998, British production



Gordon Warnecke and Daniel Day-Lewis in *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, 1985).

reached its highest level in fifty years with more than 130 films, second only to Hollywood as a center for international production. By 2001, total production costs exceeded $1 billion ($1.1 billion, to be more precise), which made Britain's industry the third-largest, or possibly the fourth-largest, film industry in the world, after India, the United States, and (sometimes) France.

Yet distribution remained heavily skewed toward Hollywood blockbusters, with five distributors tied to the majors—Fox, Buena Vista, UIP, Columbia, and Warners—controlling more than 80 percent of the market. Furthermore, 75 percent of total British production ($775 million) was funded with outside money, attracted by government-mandated tax incentives



(left) Jaye Davidson in *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992).

that permitted producers to write off 100 percent of first-year costs of British films budgeted at under $24 million. This led to what some described as a new era of "quota quickies," referring to the cheaply made films cranked out during the 1930s to meet the requirements of the Cinematograph Film Act of 1927.

These so-called "new age quickies" were poorly planned and executed projects that came into being mainly so that their backers could achieve tax benefits. Conversely, significantly enhanced government funding (e.g., $233 million for 2000 and 2001) made possible the rise of a thriving independent cinema, much of it Celtic in character and originating in the renaissance of national pride that accompanied the setting up of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh National Assembly in the late 1990s. In April 2000, the UK Film Council (FC) was formed as an umbrella organization to incorporate the British Film Institute (BFI), the British Film Commission, and all of the lottery funding previously administered by the Arts Council. Publicly funded at the level of $88 million annually, the FC had a mandate to seek co-production deals between the government and private corporations and to address the industry's long-standing structural problem of poor distribution.

In 2007, however, the government closed the tax relief loopholes and set new rates at 16 percent of the cost of larger-budget and 20 percent of smaller-budget films, which had the effect of discouraging foreign production companies from shooting in the UK; and in 2010, the FC was abolished for inefficiency and its main functions taken over by the BFI. (Ironically, one of the FC's last productions, Tom Hooper's *The King's Speech* [2010], was made for $15 million and grossed



Colin Firth in *The King's Speech* (Tom Hooper, 2010).

$235 million, as well as winning several Oscars; the FC had invested $1.6 million for a 34 percent share of net profits, which was passed on to the BFI.)

In 2012, UK prime minister David Cameron declared his government's support for the industry, stating that just as the FC had "played a crucial role in attracting the biggest and best international studios to produce their films here, so we must incentivise UK producers to chase new markets both here and overseas." Nevertheless, by 2014, the British industry once again found itself in trouble: a December 2013 study published by the BFI discovered that of 613 British films produced between 2003 and 2010, only 7 percent turned a profit. Yet the film industry remains an important component of the British economy: according to the UK Film Council shortly after its disbandment, in 2010 alone, film production accounted for more than $2 billion.

There are new signs of life as well. In late 2010, Warner Bros. completed its acquisition of Levensden Film Studio in southeastern England to become the first major Hollywood company with a permanent UK outpost since the 1940s, and it announced plans to invest nearly $200 million in the site. In addition, in 2011, the Peel Group, a gigantic British real estate and investment holding company, bought a controlling 71 percent share of the Pinewood Studio Group, which owns both Pinewood and Shepperton Studios, for approximately the same amount. All three studios were open for business by the beginning of 2013.

Australia and New Zealand

Australia

A recent and most unexpected development in English-language cinema has been the emergence of Australian film from nearly total obscurity into international prominence. Maintained by the British as a penal colony from 1788 to 1840, Australia existed as a British protectorate until 1901, when it became a self-governing commonwealth of six federated states. It had a small film industry during the silent era and produced a handful of features after World War I that were successful with both domestic and British audiences, but the coming of sound left the country with only one major production facility (Cinesound, formerly Australasian Films) from 1932 to 1956.

During World War II, Australia produced only ten features, although the numerous documentaries of the Commonwealth Film Unit claimed international attention. In the postwar period, Australia virtually ceased to have a film industry of its own but became instead a location for some British productions. As late as 1970, Australia was known to the world mainly as the exotic site of such foreign-backed features as Tony Richardson's *Ned Kelly*, Nicolas Roeg's *Walkabout*, and Ted Kotcheff's *Wake in Fright* (also known as *Outback*).

Yet Australia underwent a profound socioeconomic transformation in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, and in 1970 the federal government established the Australian Film Development Corporation (the Australian Film Commission, or AFC, after 1975) to subsidize the growth of an authentic national cinema. In 1973, the government set up the Australian Film and Television School (AFTS)—with Jerzy Toeplitz, formerly of the Polish State Film School at Łódź, as director—to train filmmakers to work in a new domestic feature industry. The government simultaneously enacted a system of lucrative tax incentives to attract foreign investment capital to Australian film production. The result was a creative explosion unprecedented in English-language cinema. Australia produced nearly 400 films between 1970 and 1985—more than were made in all of its prior history—with financing from the AFC and such semiofficial bodies as the New South Wales Film Corporation (by the end of the decade, each of the federal states had its own funding agency). These were later, somewhat pejoratively, called "AFC genre films," in that they were commissioned to become "cultural flagships of the nation," tending heavily toward period drama and literary adaptation that emphasized Australia's cultural history.

The first films, appearing in the early 1970s, were *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (Bruce Beresford, 1972) and *Alvin Purple* (Tim Burstall, 1973). Within the next few years, some extraordinary work emerged in the films of Peter Weir (b. 1944), *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) and *The Last Wave* (1977); Bruce Beresford (b. 1940), *Don's Party* (1976) and *The Getting of Wisdom* (1977); Fred Schepisi (b. 1939), *The Devil's Playground* (1976) and *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978); George Miller (b. 1945), *Mad Max* (1979); and the feature debuts of the first AFTS graduates Phillip Noyce (b. 1950), *Newsfront* (1978), and Gillian Armstrong (b. 1950), *My Brilliant Career* (1979). Unlike the productions financed with foreign capital through the

(right) Bryan Brown in *Breaker Morant* (Bruce Beresford, 1980).

Canadian Film Development Corporation during the same period, these new Australian films were mandated to have indigenous casts and crews and to treat distinctly national themes, often by adapting novels and stories from the turn-of-the-century literary revival that accompanied federation.

By the end of the 1970s, Australian films were being prominently featured at the Cannes International Film Festival and were competing strongly at European box offices. What made these films so appealing to non-Australian audiences was a combination of their cinematic vitality as the latest international new wave, their remarkable diversity of locations on the world's only island continent, and the clear, lambent quality of natural southern light—an asset that filmmakers exploited to capture the bright colors of the Australian land and its people and also to compensate for a shortage of studio facilities. (Conversely, Australian light is so pure that the industry's leading cinematographers—Russell Boyd [b. 1944], Don McAlpine [b. 1934], John Seale [b. 1942], Dean Semler [b. 1943], Peter James [b. 1947], and Geoff Burton [b. 1946]—often used diffusion filters to reduce its harshness, giving their outdoor shots a subdued, "romantic" look.)

In 1981, Australia penetrated the American market with two critical hits. The first was *Breaker Morant* (Bruce Beresford, 1980), an adaptation of a play about the actual court-martial of three Australian irregulars by the British on trumped-up atrocity charges during the Boer War. The second, *Gallipoli* (Peter Weir, 1981), was based on another episode of British treachery, in which the World War I allied command under Winston Churchill sent some 35,000 Anzac (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) troops to be slaughtered in a suicidal attempt to invade Turkey across the Dardanelles.

The following year, the Australian industry achieved a smashing commercial success in the United States with George Miller's *Mad Max II* (1981; retitled *The*





Paul Hogan in *Crocodile Dundee* (Peter Faiman, 1986).

Road Warrior for distribution by Warner Bros.). Yet Australia's banner year was 1986, when Peter Faiman's tongue-in-cheek *Crocodile Dundee*, starring the popular television comic Paul Hogan, became the highest-grossing Australian film *both* at home and in the United States, reversing a consistent postwar trend and earning a total of $120 million. In that same year, in order to generate more internal revenue, the federal government was able to lower the ceiling on its tax incentives for film investment by 13 percent without causing a negative impact on production, and it seemed as if Australia's experiment in creating a thriving and prestigious national cinema out of nothing had become a resounding, certifiable, and permanent success.

Historically, however, such success has always had its price—the migration of the very best native talent to Hollywood—and the Australian experience proved no exception. By the early 1980s, many Australian directors had come to work for the American industry. Gillian Armstrong, for example, followed her Australian punk-rock musical *Starstruck* (1982) with an American-produced film, *Mrs. Soffle* (1984), based on the turn-of-the-century case of the Biddle brothers. Its commercial failure returned her to regional Australian themes, in *High Tide* (1987) and *The Last Days of Chez Nous* (1991), but she scored a solid American success with her feminist version of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1994), and later, *Charlotte Gray* (2001), an espionage film set in Vichy France during World War II.

Bruce Beresford, who came to Hollywood after *The Club* (1980) and *Puberty Blues* (1981), both adapted from Australian authors, logged a critical hit with *Tender Mercies* (1982). Yet his filming of the biblical tale of *King David* (1985) was a commercial disaster, and his version of Beth Henley's play *Crimes of the Heart* (1986) was only a limited success, as was the offbeat mystery-comedy *Her Alibi* (1989). Beresford returned occasionally to Australia to direct such culturally indigenous material as *The Fringe Dwellers* (1986), concerned with the plight of unassimilable aborigines in Queensland; and *Sydney: A Story of a City* (1999), a documentary portrait shot in the 70mm IMAX format.

(right) *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Peter Weir, 1975).

In the United States, however, he continued to work in the mainstream, sometimes quite successfully—as in *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989), based on Alfred Uhry's Pulitzer Prize–winning play about race relations in the Deep South in the early days of the civil rights movement, which won four Academy Awards, including Best Picture—and sometimes not.

Fred Schepisi has experienced similar ups and downs with his American productions: *Barbarosa* (1982); *Iceman* (1984); *Plenty* (1985), adapted from the David Hare play; *Roxanne* (1987), a contemporary comedic reworking of Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*; and the highly acclaimed *A Cry in the Dark* (1988), based on Australia's infamous "Dingo dog" murder case against Lindy Chamberlain for infanticide in 1980. Even George Miller, whose lively, if overblown, *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome* (1985) was one of the year's top-grossing films, performed equivocally in his adaptation of John Updike's *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987) and his own medical docudrama *Lorenzo's Oil* (1992). Yet Miller, who was trained as a physician, scored an enormous hit as the producer and the co-writer of *Babe* (Chris Noonan, 1995), the mock-heroic story of an Australian pig who learns to herd sheep, which earned seven Oscar nominations (including Best Picture) and won, deservedly, for Best Visual Effects for its creative use of CGI. The film earned $241 million worldwide against a $30 million budget. In 2015, Miller rebooted the Mad Max saga with the postapocalyptic, neo-feminist *Mad Max: Fury Road*, which was widely praised for its exhilarating action sequences and became the most commercially successful film in the franchise.

Phillip Noyce (b. 1950) was committed to working in Australia during the first part of his career. His most significant films there were the socially provocative bi-racial thriller *Backroads* (1977), shot in four weeks for $25,000; *Newsfront* (1978), focusing on the competition between rival Australian and American newsreel companies in the early years of television; *Heatwave* (1982), a visually opulent film noir set among the power elite of Sydney; *Shadows of the Peacock* (1987), a stylish melodrama about an interracial love affair; and the inventive suspense thriller *Dead Calm* (1989), based on the Charles Williams novel, partly filmed by Orson Welles between 1967 and 1969 as *The Deep*. Another film, *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002), based on a novel by Doris Pilkington, deals with the adventures of three young aboriginal girls as they trek across the outback in search of their homeland.

The most consistent Australian director working in America today is Peter Weir, who is also the most internationally prominent figure to emerge from his nation's new wave. Weir's first two films were the quirky black comedies *Homedale* (1971) and *The Cars That Ate Paris* (1974), both made and distributed domestically on an ad hoc basis. Yet his first serious feature was *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), a haunting adaptation of Joan Lindsay's novel about the mysterious disappearance of three girls



and a mistress from their country boarding school during a holiday outing in the bush on St. Valentine's Day 1900. While this visually and aurally arresting film contains elements of Antonioni's *L'avventura*, *Picnic* is finally about the dangerous energy released in the clash of alien cultures and environments—here, the disciplined bourgeois repressiveness of Appleyard College and the seductive but menacing physicality of the strange volcanic formation known as Hanging Rock.

No less spiritually harrowing is *The Last Wave* (1977), based on an original idea by Weir, in which a cataclysmic deluge is announced to a resolutely conventional Sydney corporate lawyer (Richard Chamberlain) in a series of strange premonitory dreams; as the mystery unravels, we learn that the attorney has entered the mythic "dream time" of tribal aborigines, in which he is the messianic avatar of a primal apocalypse that does, in fact, occur at the film's conclusion.

Gallipoli (1981) was Weir's last completely Australian-funded feature. *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1982) was his first to be fully financed by an American major (MGM). This film adapts Christopher Koch's novel about the experiences of a young Australian journalist stationed in Jakarta, Indonesia, during the fall of the Sukarno government in 1965. With its $6 million budget and star performances by Sigourney Weaver and Mel Gibson, it is somewhat glossier than Weir's earlier work. Yet *The Year of Living Dangerously* probably renders more vividly than any non-Marxist film of its era the appalling degradation of Third World poverty and its symbiotic relationship with political violence. Weir has since moved to Hollywood and continued his career successfully there, with films such as *Dead Poets Society* (1989), *The Truman Show* (1998), *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* (2003), and *The Way Back* (2010).

Of the large number of excellent directors who have chosen to work largely in Australia, the most prominent are Paul Cox and Jane Campion. Paul Cox (b. 1940), however, is probably the most important director working in Australia today. Born in the Netherlands, Cox emigrated to Melbourne and began to make low-budget experimental films in 1965. His first features, *Illuminations* (1976) and *Inside Looking Out* (1977), were autobiographical mood pieces with shoestring budgets, but *Kostas* (1979), about a Greek journalist in exile working as a Melbourne taxi driver, was solidly funded by the Victoria Film Corporation and proved to be Cox's breakthrough film. His next feature, *Lonely Hearts* (1982), won several international awards for its sensitive depiction of the slowly developing romance of a shy, middle-aged couple; and his visually and aurally striking *Man of Flowers* (1983) impressed many critics with its tense, Hitchcock-like rendition of an emotionally isolated eccentric. Cox produced a clear masterpiece in *Cactus* (1986), easily the most "tactile" film made in Australia since *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. *Cactus*, about a love affair between two people, one blind since childhood, the other threatened with blindness through an automobile accident after a lifetime of sight; it represents a complex blend of intense emotional drama, documentary technique, and abstract experimental form.

Jane Campion (b. in Wellington, New Zealand, 1955) is unquestionably the most interesting filmmaker to emerge from Australian cinema during the 1980s and the 1990s. A number of her shorts received wide recognition while she was still a student at the AFTS, with *Peel* (1982/1983) winning the Palme d'Or at Cannes for the Best Short Film in 1986. Experimental in form and feminist in theme, Campion's early films focus on such subjects as familial power relationships and sexual harassment. Campion's first feature, *Sweetie* (1989), was a black comedy about an eccentric young woman whose emotional disturbance ultimately wreaks havoc on her family, while *An Angel at My Table* (1990) is based on the harrowing autobiography of Janet Frame, a writer who was misdiagnosed as a chronic schizophrenic and institutionalized for much of her early life.

Campion directed her third feature, *The Piano* (1993), from her own screenplay about an unwed mother who is sent by her family in mid-Victorian Scotland to consummate an arranged marriage with an emigrant English farmer in the wilds of coastal New Zealand. This woman has the "dark power" of willing herself mute, "speaking" mainly through the medium of music played on a massive grand piano that she brings with her against enormous odds from home. Her emotional blockage and subsequent sensual awakening in a tumultuous affair with her husband's neighbor unleash forces that nearly destroy all three parties (and do, in fact, destroy the symbol-making genius of her art). Rapturously photographed on location by Stuart Dryburgh in the Gothic mode of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, this darkly romantic film won a number of international awards, including three Oscars, and demonstrated the remarkable staying power of the Australian New Wave.

(right) Robert Menzies and Isabelle Huppert in *Cactus* (Paul Cox, 1986).





Anna Paquin and Holly Hunter in *The Piano* (Jane Campion, 1993).

Campion has since made notable adaptations of Henry James's novel *Portrait of a Lady* (1996) and Susanna Moore's *In the Cut* (2003), as well as *Bright Star* (2009), from her own script about the last three years of Romantic poet John Keats, and *Top of the Lake* (2013), a television mini-series about the disappearance of a pregnant twelve-year-old girl set in New Zealand.

The Australian film industry, which owes its existence to government subsidies begun in the early 1970s, is still heavily dependent on government investment and protective legislation to survive. In 1988, the Australian Film Finance Corporation (AFFC) was created to invest in commercially viable production, while the Australian Film Commission and Film Australia were left to fund "cultural products" that were unlikely to return investments (although the Film Commission itself had only about $10 million a year to go around). The AFFC required that some kind of pre-sale agreement be in place before giving support to a film project, and this clearly encouraged a trend toward commercialization.

In 2008, the AFFC, the Australian Film Commission, and Film Australia were consolidated into a single entity called Screen Australia, which pooled resources to stimulate local production. Such help is crucial because of what David Stratton described in 2000 as "the overwhelming competition from Hollywood films swamping the nation's cinemas." In other words, just as in the United Kingdom, the American majors control distribution. So even though the Australian industry currently produces twenty to twenty-five films a year, the Australian audience for them is hard to find. Furthermore, to take 1998 and 1999 as an example, forty-one films were made with a combined budget of $72 million, but only a few had budgets greater than $3.5 million, and seventeen were made for less than $600,000.

This means that Australia is still the low-cost gateway to English-language production that it has been for the last thirty years, and it makes Australia a desirable place for offshore companies to produce films with outside money but with largely Australian casts and crews. Notable examples include George



Hugh Jackman and Nicole Kidman in *Australia* (Baz Luhrmann, 2008).

Miller's *Babe: Pig in the City* (1998), Alex Proyas's *Dark City* (1998), Jane Campion's *Holy Smoke* (1999), and Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge!* (2001), which were all produced on location in Australia by Australian directors working with foreign investment capital under the aegis of major American distributors.

This practice is good for full employment but creates disequilibrium within the industry—for example, Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge!* budget of $60 million was ten times larger than that of any Australian feature made before it, but once local salaries were paid, all of the profits went back to Fox. The same held true for Lurmann's epic *Australia* (2008), which climaxes with the Japanese bombing of the city of Darwin in 1942, just months after their attack on Pearl Harbor. It was financed by Fox for about $120 million, and was the second-highest-grossing Australian film of all time, but most of the worldwide grosses returned to the United States. Thus, the question of cultural priorities is rising once more: Australians must choose between becoming a mini-Hollywood (e.g., Australian media baron Rupert Murdoch opened Fox Studios in Sydney in 2000, where George Lucas created much of *Star Wars: Episode II—Attack of the Clones* [2002]) or having a truly indigenous film industry whose creative direction lies in reflecting something authentically and unmistakably Australian.

New Zealand

New Zealand (population 3.8 million), Australia's small island neighbor, sought to imitate that nation's success by establishing a film commission in 1978 to encourage the development of an indigenous film industry that would enable "the world to see New Zealanders as they see themselves." Featuring topography that is even more spectacularly varied than Australia's, New Zealand had produced twenty-seven features between 1910 and 1930, but only seventeen from 1930 to 1970, owing to American domination after the coming of sound.

When Roger Donaldson's (b. in Australia, 1945) futuristic political thriller *Sleeping Dogs* (1977) received

international distribution, the government became convinced that an indigenous industry could be formed, and it threw the support of the new commission behind that director's second feature, *Smash Palace* (1981), a tense drama of marital discord that was a great critical success and New Zealand's highest-earning film to date. At about the same time, four other domestic features appeared from new directors trained in television—*Skin Deep* (Geoff Steven, 1978), *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* (John Laing, 1980), *Pictures* (Michael Black, 1981), and *Goodbye Pork Pie* (Geoff Murphy, 1981)—which confirmed the New Zealand Film Commission's (NZFC) success in promoting New Zealand films on New Zealand subjects.

Loopholes in the New Zealand tax code during this time created investment incentives in the form of tax shelters, and this caused the exponential expansion of film production from two features in 1980, to five in 1981, six in 1982 and 1983, and fourteen in 1984, when the loopholes were closed. (Many of the tax-shelter films were co-productions—for example, Mike Newell's *Bad Blood* [1982], produced with the United Kingdom, and Roger Donaldson's *The Bounty* [1984], produced with the United States.) For the rest of the 1980s, domestic production leveled off at an average of five to six films annually, and New Zealand films began to appear regularly in competition at Cannes and other festivals. The Film Commission then gradually assumed its role as a funding agency for script development and for some production finance, as well as a sales agent for completed projects.

During the 1980s, the Film Commission facilitated the work of a growing number of talented directors, several of whom would follow their Australian counterparts to Hollywood, of whom Roger Donaldson has been the most commercially successful. His American films have covered a broad range of genres, and he has moved onto another plane entirely from the industry he helped found in the late 1970s.

After the riotous road film *Goodbye Pork Pie*, Geoff Murphy (b. in Wellington, New Zealand, 1938) directed *Utu* (1983), one of the foundational texts of New Zealand cinema. This film, whose title is the Maori word for "retribution," is set in 1870 during the last of the Land Wars and concerns a fictionalized renegade uprising against colonial British rule. (The script is deliberately vague about the locations and the tribes involved to avoid offending contemporary Maori sensibilities.) Vincent Ward (b. in Greytown, New Zealand, 1956), whose hieratic coming-of-age drama *Vigil* (1984) was the first New Zealand film to be shown in competition at Cannes, also directed the New Zealand/Australian co-production *The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey* (1988), a fantasy adventure about fourteenth-century English villagers who escape the Black Death by tunneling to the other side of the earth through an abandoned mine shaft and stumble onto twentieth-century Auckland.

The year 1994 was a banner year for the new industry, witnessing the release of both Peter Jackson's *Heavenly Creatures* and Lee Tamahori's *Once Were Warriors*. The former, based on a real-life case, is about two schoolgirls in Auckland in the 1950s who fall in love, construct an elaborate fantasy world, and then commit murder when reality intrudes. The film contains extraordinary performances, lush cinematography (by Alun Bollinger and Allen Guilford), and innovative production design and special effects to mark a true maturity of vision for New Zealand cinema. As harshly realistic as *Heavenly Creatures* is romantic, *Once Were Warriors* is about the violent, degraded lives of Maoris living on welfare in an Auckland slum; it unflinchingly presents scenes of brutal spousal abuse and became the highest-grossing film in New Zealand history in the year of its release. (A sequel, Ian Mune's *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted* [1999], became the second most commercially successful film in New Zealand.) Half Maori himself, Tamahori (b. 1950) won international acclaim for *Once Were Warriors*, which was his debut feature, and he landed pretty quickly in Hollywood.

Before *Heavenly Creatures*, Peter Jackson (b. in Wellington, New Zealand, 1961) had directed three cheerfully distasteful, in-your-face splatterfests: *Bad Taste* (1987), in which human-flesh-eating aliens come to earth to stock supplies for an off-world fast-food franchise; *Meet the Feebles* (1989), which mixes puppet animation with live action in a kind of grotesque parody of *The Muppet Show*; and *Braindead* (U.S. title: *Dead-Alive*, 1992), an imaginatively designed and executed "splatstick comedy" that carries visceral outrage to new heights and was described by one critic as "a necrophiliac's wet dream." All three of these low-budget films were produced by Jackson's own WingNut Films Ltd., with assistance from NZFC; they employed elaborate but cost-efficient special effects. After *Braindead*, Jackson and his partners founded Weta Digital Ltd., a computer-animation studio, in an old factory in Wellington, which was used to produce the visual effects for *Heavenly Creatures*.

(right) Anzac Wallace as Te Wheke, a leader of a late-nineteenth-century uprising against the British, in *Utu* (Geoff Murphy, 1983).





Elijah Wood in *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (Peter Jackson, 2001).

These caught the attention of Hollywood producer-director Robert Zemeckis, who hired Jackson to direct *The Frighteners* (1996), a horror-comedy financed and released by Universal Pictures but shot and post-produced in New Zealand, with digital effects supplied by Weta. (Zemeckis also used Weta to produce some of the digital effects for his 1997 science-fiction film *Contact*.) The film, which is about a supernatural private eye who solves a twenty-year-old murder mystery with the help of a posse of assorted ghosts and poltergeists, was not commercially successful in the United States, but it was recognized as "a creative landmark" in computer-generated imagery by the *Washington Times* and raised New Zealand's international profile as a professional production site.

All of these factors figured in New Line Cinema's decision to award Jackson the contract to produce all three films in the fantasy trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*. With a budget of $270 million, the trilogy represents not only the most expensive production ever undertaken south of the equator, but a sum larger than the combined budget of every 35mm New Zealand feature ever made. (The Film Commission, which sees government funding not so much as a subsidy but as an investment in the future, cannot fail to be impressed by the staggering return on its $2.5 million investment in Jackson's first four films—this is exactly how the system was expected to work.)

The first installment in the Tolkien epic, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), was a huge critical and commercial windfall, returning more than three times its negative cost. Jackson did principal live-action photography on all three films at once between 2000 and 2001, with postproduction at Weta continued through the release of the second and third films, *The Two Towers* (2002) and *The Return of the King* (2003). The trilogy represents a landmark in the history of computer-generated imagery and has made New Zealand one of the most attractive locations for production and postproduction anywhere in the world, although the industry's infrastructure is still precarious because the economy of New Zealand is so small. Furthermore, because of the country's tiny population, the New Zealand film industry depends on exports, whereas Australia, for example, is large enough to maintain a medium-sized industry on the strength of its domestic market alone (although stiff competition from American distributors makes this increasingly difficult).

Nevertheless, production was booming at the turn of the century, with seven domestic features completed in 1999 and nine in 2000. American feature productions such as Columbia's *Vertical Limit* (Martin Campbell, 2000) were shot on location there, as were dozens of Indian "Bollywood" musicals, American television series such as Universal's *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001), and Peter Jackson's *King Kong* (2005), *The Lovely*

Bones (2009), and The Hobbit trilogy (2012–2014). The most prominent New Zealand woman director (aside from Jane Campion, who has been adopted by Australia) is Alison Maclean (b. in Ottawa, 1958), whose first feature, the dark psychological thriller *Crush* (1992), won several international awards. In 1999, she directed the independent American feature *Jesus' Son*, a film about heroin addiction in the early 1970s, financed by Lion's Gate.

The New Zealand film that has spoken the most directly to women's issues, however, was written and directed by a man, Gregor Nicholas (b. in Auckland, 1959). *Broken English* (1996) is the story of a familial war between a reactionary Croatian immigrant living as a successful drug dealer in Auckland and his two defiant daughters, both thoroughly modern young adults; it speaks to the hybridization of New Zealand urban culture. The film became the third most popular of the 1990s with domestic audiences, after *Once Were Warriors* (1994) and its sequel, *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted* (1999), suggesting that New Zealand is very much a contemporary society in transition.

Canada

Canada is another Commonwealth nation whose cinema has experienced sudden and unexpected growth. Although Canada is one of the largest and wealthiest countries in the world, its film market was dominated until very recently by American productions, much as British cinema had been during the 1930s. Before 1978, film production in Canada was basically a cottage industry under the tight control of the National Film Board (NFB). Founded in 1939 by British documentary producer John Grierson, the NFB coordinated all government film activities in an attempt to end Hollywood dominance and establish a national cinema that would, in Grierson's words, "interpret Canada to Canadians and the world."

For this purpose, Grierson gathered about him a group of talented documentarists: Stuart Legg, Stanley Hawes, Raymond Spottiswoode, Joris Ivens, John Fernhout, and Irving Jacoby. During World War II, Canada became the world's leading producer of Allied war propaganda films—the World in Action series (1942–1945) and Canada Carries On (1940–1945)—as well as other types of nonfiction film. After the war, Grierson returned to England, but the NFB continued to produce distinguished documentaries and animated shorts, as in the brilliant experimental work of Norman McLaren (1914–1987). With the arrival of television, Canadian filmmakers turned increasingly to *cinéma vérité* techniques (the ***cinéma direct*** movement, in fact, was founded in the early 1960s by French-Canadian filmmakers at the NFB, including Michel Brault, Pierre Perrault, and Claude Jutra, under the influence of Jean Rouch).

For all of Canada's success with documentary and animated cinema, feature filmmaking was left almost exclusively to the Americans until 1963, when the NFB produced two remarkable semi-documentaries. Don Haldane's *Drylanders* is an account of the harsh existence of a Canadian farming family during the first thirty years of the century, and Paul Perrault and Michel Brault's *Pour la suite du monde* (*So That the World Goes On/Moontrap*) is about the attempt of the people of an isolated St. Lawrence River island to revive the hunting of beluga whales.

By 1964, the NFB was supporting feature production in both French and English. Yet Canadian feature production averaged only four films per year, and many Canadian directors (e.g., Norman Jewison, Sidney J. Furie, Arthur Hiller, Silvio Narizzano, Ted Kotcheff) and actors (Donald Sutherland, Christopher Plummer, Michael Sarrazin, Joanna Shimkus) migrated south to work in the American industry. And it was a rare Canadian feature indeed—such as Irvin Kershner's *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* (U.S.-Canada, 1964), shot on location in Montreal—that enjoyed even modest success beyond its own borders.

In an effort to reverse this trend, the Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC) was established by an act of Parliament in 1967 with a fund of $10 million (now a revolving annual fund of $4.5 million) to promote the national feature industry through grants and guaranteed loans. By 1972, the annual feature output had risen to twelve. In 1974, the CFDC scored an unprecedented international success with Ted Kotcheff's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, which won the Golden Bear at Berlin, as well as an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Film. Nevertheless, by 1977, less than $6 million in private funds was being invested in Canadian feature films.

In 1978, however, two things occurred that radically changed the nature of the Canadian industry. The first was a policy change at the CFDC in which the seed money for Canadian feature projects was lent to producers rather than to directors, increasing investment incentive within the business community. Second, and infinitely more important, the Canadian government enacted wide-ranging tax-shelter legislation



Richard Dreyfuss in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (Ted Kotcheff, 1974).

that allowed a 100 percent write-off for film investment, which rapidly became the second most popular form of tax relief in the country (after oil depletion allowances). The result was a boom in the production of commercial features, the likes of which few countries have experienced in modern times: $6 million was invested in Canadian feature production in 1977, more than $150 million in 1979, and $300 million in 1980.

At the same time, co-productions with the United States, France, Italy, and Japan, as well as domestic productions on a previously unthinkable big-budget scale, have combined to produce one of the most commercially lucrative production environments anywhere in the world today. Between 1979 and 1981, more than 150 features were shot in Canada, stretching the industry's technical capacity very thin. Among the first big winners were Ivan Reitman's *Meatballs*, with $40 million in receipts in 1979; and Bob Clark's odious *Porky's* (1981), with $100 million, which, though shot on location in Florida, became the highest-grossing "Canadian" film in the industry's brief history. That the environment and the films lacked a specifically Canadian character troubled some observers, but there can be no question that the kind of filmmaking activity financed in Canada during this time represented a solid economic achievement.

With twenty-four entries at the 1980 Cannes Festival, Canada announced its intention to become a "world class" force in cinema but, in fact, its success in this arena has been limited at best. Although Canada has continued to produce a number of interesting films ith uniquely Canadian content, the majority of them are either shot out of the country with CFDC funding or use Canadian locales to represent other places entirely (particularly aggravating to Canadians in this regard are the hundreds of so-called Stars and Stripes films, which feature Canadian towns as cities or unidentified locations in the United States and employ mainly American actors). With major production facilities in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, much of Canada's film industry services American producer/distributors, so that it has been nicknamed "Hollywood North." In 2011, for example, Toronto ranked third in total industry production, behind only Los Angeles and New York City.

Yet foreign-dominated (largely, American) film and video distribution companies accounted for 73 percent of Canada's gross industry revenues, and non-Canadians also earned 95 percent of all royalties, rentals, and commissions. For all the abuses of the tax-shelter period, the production boom did result in the development of a cadre of skilled technical workers, as well as experienced producers such as Robert Lantos, whose Alliance Communications Corporation (after 1998, Alliance Atlantis) became an important distributor of Canadian features and the world's twelfth-largest communications company, on the basis of revenues. In 2007, however, Alliance Atlantis was acquired by CanWest Global Communications, and it ceased production to focus almost exclusively on the distribution of American and international films, as does the less powerful Canadian-American company Lion's Gate Entertainment.

In 1982, the government moved to reduce the film investment write-off to 50 percent, and in 1985 and 1986, it restructured the CFDC, which had changed its name to Telefilm Canada in 1984, to encourage local production and control and to eliminate certain tax incentives for foreign investment. In 1988, the noted Hollywood director Norman Jewison, a Canadian by birth, founded the Canadian Film Centre (CFC) in Toronto to train screenwriters, directors, cinematographers, editors, and other filmmaking personnel. Supported by both government and corporate funds, this national film school is dedicated to creating a solidly Canadian industrial infrastructure. Nevertheless, the Canadian film industry remains dominated by the American majors, which continue to control distribution and collect 80 percent of annual box-office receipts.

While the country at large was becoming a major center for international production, several directors with a distinctly Canadian vision emerged: David Cronenberg (b. 1943), Atom Egoyan (b. 1960), Guy Maddin (b. 1956), and Denys Arcand (b. 1941). Cronenberg made avant-garde shorts before turning to features in the 1970s, when he wrote and directed three horror films with the backing of the CFDC: *They Came from Within* (U.S. title: *Shivers*, 1975) was about phallic parasites who attack the residents of a Montreal high-rise, adding a new trope to the repertoire of splatter when one of the invaders erupts from the abdomen of its human host (a trick stolen, with great fanfare, by Ridley Scott in *Alien* four years later); in *Rabid* (1977), a woman is turned into a virulent vampire when a medical experiment misfires; and in *The Brood*, a woman is able to externalize her murderous rage as a pack of monstrous dwarfs.

Like the NZFC-funded splatter films of Peter Jackson, Cronenberg's CFDC-supported work is antibourgeois and has a high quotient of gore, but it is considerably less cheerful. In fact, these early films function like allegory—they are both monster movies and meditations on social decay in the form of sexual promiscuity, child abuse, divorce, and so on—because Cronenberg's horror is a unique blend of the visceral and the cerebral, a strain that continued in his later mainstream work for American studios, such as his adaptation of Stephen King's *The Dead Zone* (1983) for Paramount and his remake of *The Fly* (1986) for Fox. Yet it is arguably his Canadian-produced films that achieve the most thematic coherence and distinctiveness of vision.

After *Scanners* (1981), a cautionary fable about mind control, complete with exploding heads, Cronenberg wrote and directed *Videodrome* (1983), whose phantasmagoric equation of television with pornography was realized in the 1990s with Internet porn and tabloid TV, and then established his reputation as a serious artist with *Dead Ringers* (1988). This story of twin brothers, both celebrated gynecologists who fall in love with the same woman (a well-known movie actress), was simultaneously a study of erotic obsession, psychological codependency, and misogyny. The movie was photographed in highly stylized color by Peter Suschitzky, who would become Cronenberg's regular director of photography, and part of the film's brilliance lay in the computer-assisted split-screen effects that turned lead performer Jeremy Irons convincingly into identical twins.

Following typically idiosyncratic adaptations of Beat novelist William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* (1991) and David Henry Hwang's stage play *M Butterfly* (1993), Cronenberg wrote and directed the controversial *Crash* (1996), which won the Special Jury Prize at Cannes. Inspired by a J. G. Ballard novel, *Crash* concerns a techno-sexual subculture that fetishizes injuries sustained in automobile accidents, the more extreme the better. Seeking ever more supercharged thrills, these individuals become orgasmic by staging crashes that bring them as close to death as possible, in a perverse sexual act that merges their flesh with the metallic wreckage of their cars. Although it offended many critics (and was reviled by Ted Turner, corporate owner of its own distributor, Fine Line Features), *Crash* is a sophisticated, if sometimes repellent, critique of late capitalism's material culture—a critique continued with a vengeance in *eXistenZ* (1999). Based on an original screenplay by Cronenberg, this film is set in a future in which much of the population



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[1] Heidi von Palleske and Jeremy Irons in *Dead Ringers* (David Cronenberg, 1988). [2] Jude Law and Jennifer Jason Leigh in *eXistenZ* (David Cronenberg, 1999).



Sarah Polley in *The Sweet Hereafter* (Atom Egoyan, 1997).

spends most of its time enmeshed in "organic" virtual-reality games, and its intricate plot concerns the inventor of one such game, "eXistenZ," who together with her partner becomes trapped inside the game system. What makes this particular game so unique is that it is downloaded directly into the central nervous system and adapted to the individual user, so that it is scarcely distinguishable from reality itself. Intellectually complex and philosophically speculative, *eXistenZ* makes the Wachowski siblings' The Matrix trilogy (1999–2003) look unimaginative by comparison, and it won the Silver Bear at Berlin for high artistic achievement.

David Cronenberg is recognized today as a major figure in world cinema, even though he works on a relatively small scale (e.g., *Crash*, *eXistenZ*, and *Spider* [2002] all had budgets of around $10 million) in the context of an industry dwarfed by the might of its American neighbor, and although much of his recent work has been produced by the Canadian communications giant Alliance Atlantis, he has continued to produce important films in *A History of Violence* (2005), *Eastern Promises* (2007), *A Dangerous Method* (2011), and *Cosmopolis* (2012).

Atom Egoyan, born in Cairo, Egypt, to Armenian parents who emigrated to Victoria, British Columbia, became a household name among film critics with the international success of *The Sweet Hereafter* (1997), although he had been directing low-budget independent features in Canada since *Next of Kin* in 1984. *The Sweet Hereafter* is an adaptation of a Russell Banks novel about the impact of a deadly school-bus accident on survivors in a small upstate New York town (Egoyan changed the locale to western Canada). The film, produced for Alliance Communications, won a Special Grand Jury Prize at Cannes and was nominated for two Academy Awards, including Best Director.

Working as his own writer, producer, and (sometimes) editor and lead actor, Egoyan began making a series of films about dysfunctional families and alienated individuals trying to connect with others, in which a central theme is video voyeurism and the

self-reflexivity of the filmic image. *Calendar* (1993), a 16mm film whose "look" was inspired by Sergei Parajanov's *The Color of Pomegranates* (*Sayat-Nova,* 1969), explores issues of Armenian identity in the story of a photographer (Egoyan) and his wife (Egoyan's real wife, Arsinée Khanjian), who visit former Soviet Armenia to take pictures of churches to use as calendar copy. This part of the film is narrated by amateur videos that the couple has made of their trip, which the photographer watches obsessively in the wife's absence (it soon becomes clear that she has stayed in Armenia because she has fallen in love with their driver). The other part of *Calendar* is devoted to a series of identical "romantic" dinners that the photographer stages in his home for a series of women who resemble his wife, as part of a perverse erotic ritual that the women are apparently paid to enact.

These early films are all part of a clear path leading to *Exotica* (1994), Egoyan's first mainstream work, produced as a medium-budget project for Alliance. This film's title comes from the name of a strip club on the outskirts of Toronto that satisfies a broad range of male fantasies. Several seemingly unrelated plots revolve around the denizens of this club that seem, until the very end, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that refuse to fit together. Only when *Exotica* is over and the spectator can work backward through its various individual stories is the central thread clear; then we realize that the film has been about the fact that things are never what they seem because the past that might reveal their true meaning is consistently repressed by social consensus—the "loading of the dice" invoked by Leonard Cohen's title song "Everybody Knows."

Constructed in his signature mosaic style and treating themes that pervade his earlier work, *The Sweet Hereafter* is quintessential Egoyan and a film that offers persuasive testimony to the artistic vitality of Canadian cinema. It is hard to imagine a story, a filmmaker, and a production context as well matched, and indeed, Egoyan's subsequent work—*Felicia's Journey* (1999), *Ararat* (2002), *Where the Truth Lies* (2005), *Adoration* (2008)—has never quite equaled it. Similar to Cronenberg, however, Egoyan has helped put Canadian cinema distinctively on the map, and many of his films before 2003 were produced with the backing of Robert Lantos's Alliance Atlantis.

Guy Maddin is the most experimental of Canadian directors to have achieved some mainstream recognition. He began his career making avant-garde shorts for the Winnipeg Film Group. Frequently compared to David Lynch's debut feature *Eraserhead* (1979), Maddin's first feature, *Tales from the Gimli Hospital* (1988), is set during an early-twentieth-century smallpox outbreak in backwoods Manitoba and is constructed as a series of fables told by two patients in the title institution. Invoking the narrative vocabulary of silent and early sound film, Maddin gives the film a stark, Expressionistic look and a self-consciously archaic technical veneer.

Shot like *Gimli Hospital* in luminous black and white, *Archangel* (1990) uses Josef von Sternberg's *The Scarlet Empress* (1935) as the subtext for its story of a crippled British officer stranded in the Russian Arctic during World War I, and *Careful* (1992) is shot in a style reminiscent of the German *Bergfilm* ("mountain film"), so popular in the late 1920s, although it is colored with what appears to be hand-tinting. The film is set in the remote Alpine village of Tolzbad, where all of the residents speak in whispers to avoid causing an avalanche, clearly an allegory of emotional and psychological repression. Among its many technical anachronisms is a hissing, popping sound track, evocative of early sound films.

Maddin's fourth feature, *Twilight of the Ice Nymphs* (1997), his first made on less than a shoestring budget (about $1 million) with a cast of name actors (e.g., Shelley Duvall), is a bizarre love story that charts no new ground, but his six-minute short *Heart of the World* (2000), a dystopic mini-epic about the end of the world as conceived by a late-1920s Soviet montage artist (e.g., Dziga Vertov), has won multiple awards. Maddin's unique appropriation of film history has been called "postmodern expressionism," and it suggests an aesthetic sensibility that is more Germanic (harking back, for example, not only to Expressionism, but also to *Kammerspielfilm*, Universal horror, and film noir) than Soviet, despite his experiments with Soviet-style montage.

In 1995, Maddin became the youngest person ever to win a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Telluride Film Festival. His most recent work includes *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary* (2002), *The Saddest Music in the World* (2003), *Brand upon the Brain!* (2006), and *Keyhole* (2011).

Denys Arcand began his film career making documentaries for the National Film Board of Canada, including a feature-length indictment of the miserable conditions inside Quebec's textile industry, *On est au coton* (1970), which was officially banned by the NFB until 1976. He also made a handful of theatrical features and directed films for television before he wrote and directed *Le déclin de l'empire américain*



Stephane Leonard and Tara Birtwhistle in *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary* (Guy Maddin, 2002).

(*The Decline of the American Empire*, 1986), which was a breakthrough for him in several respects. Not only did it win the International Critics Prize at Cannes and eight Genies (the Canadian equivalent of Oscars), but it was also a crossover hit in Canada, where it was seen by more English-language speakers than any previous Quebec-produced French-language film to date. (It was the highest-grossing Quebec film of all time in the international market until Louis Saia's *Les boys* in 1997, which was succeeded by Eric Canuel's Ontario-Quebec co-production *Bon Cop, Bad Cop* in 2006.)

Le déclin, superbly photographed by Arcand's regular director of photography, Guy Dufaux (b. 1943), is constructed as a series of conversations among a group of Montreal academics, four men and four women, as they prepare for a gourmet dinner party. Discussing both their personal and professional lives, the eight individuals create a sharply etched portrait of contemporary urban life. Arcand scored another hit with his next film, *Jésus de Montréal* (1989), which won the Jury Prize at Cannes and four Genies, and like its predecessor, was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film.

Another satirical critique of contemporary social mores, *Jésus* is about the staging of a revisionist passion play that is ultimately rejected by the Catholic Church officials, so that the actors become outcasts and assume their roles from the play in real life. Adapted by Brad Fraser from his own play, Arcand's *Love and Human Remains* (1993), is another dark comedy of sexual manners that examines a group of urban twentysomethings as they move through a series of meaningless relationships and couplings at the same time that a serial killer relentlessly stalks the city's women. His mockumentary about the media manipulation involved in the discovery and creation of a new celebrity supermodel, *Stardom* (2000), was widely hailed as a shrewd auto-critique of contemporary "infotainment," and it became the first Canadian film in fifty years to be selected to close the Cannes Film



Jean Duceppe and Jacques Gagnon in *Mon oncle Antoine* (Claude Jutra, 1971).

Festival. In 2007, Arcand's *L'âge des ténèbres* (*The Dark Ages*) was selected as the closing film at Cannes.

Arcand is the most prominent and successful exemplar of the film movement begun in the 1970s known as le cinéma québecois. It was led by the former critic Jean-Pierre Lefebvre (b. 1941), who between 1964 and 1998 directed twenty-three features, most of them shot in 16mm or, later, on Hi-8 video. Many of these films were in the experimental, polemical style of Jean-Luc Godard.

Québecois filmmakers who were influenced by Lefebvre include André Forcier (b. 1947), Jacques Leduc (b. 1941), Michel Brault (b. 1928), and Gilles Groulx (1931–1994). Brault is Canada's most influential cinematographer, who also directed features in the *cinéma vérité* style, the most important of which was *Les ordres* (*Orders*, 1974), a docudrama about the October Crisis of 1970, when the militant separatist organization FLQ (Front de Libération du Québec) kidnapped two government ministers, and the Canadian government invoked the War Measures Act, giving unlimited arrest powers to the police. (Brault won the Best Director Award at Cannes for this film.) An exponent of *cinéma direct*, Groulx directed the feature-length *Le chat dans le sac* (1964), a Godardian study of Quebec's youth during the "Quiet Revolution" that won the Grand Prix at the Festival du Cinéma Canadien, as well as the avowedly Marxist *24 heures ou plus . . .* (*24 Hours or More*, 1971–1972; released 1977), which uses Eisensteinian intellectual montage to critique Quebec's social and economic structure and raise questions of national identity.

Other Francophone directors formative of Quebec cinema are Claude Jutra (1930–1986), whose meditative *Mon oncle Antoine* (1971) is still considered one of the best Canadian films ever made, and whose nineteenth-century period piece *Kamouraska* (1973) was one of the most expensive; Gilles Carle (b. 1929), whose family melodrama *Les Plouffe* (1981) and epic romance *Maria Chapdelaine* (1983) were both adapted

from influential novels; Jean-Claude Lauzon (1953–1997), whose debut feature, the violent crime drama *Un zoo la nuit* (*Night Zoo*, 1987), swept the Genies and was followed by the hallucinatory *Léolo* (1992); Mireille Dansereau (b. 1943), whose *La vie rêvée* (1972) was the first Quebec dramatic feature to be directed by a woman, as well as being a call to liberation from Québecois machismo; and Léa Pool (b. 1950), whose early features *La femme de l'hôtel* (*A Woman in Transit*, 1984) and *Anne Trister* (1986) ripened the feminist strain in Quebec cinema with a European art-film sensibility.

The prominent position of *cinéma québecois* filmmakers within the Canadian industry was illustrated by the talent on display in *Montréal vu par . . .* (1991), an anthology of six short films made to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the city's first European settlement, which were directed by Denys Arcand, Michel Brault, Atom Egoyan, Léa Pool, Patricia Rozema, and Jacques Leduc.

Today there is a thriving Francophone film industry centered in Montreal, and the Quebec audience is intensely loyal. Nevertheless, *le cinéma québecois* during the 1980s and the 1990s commanded less than a 10 percent share of the province's theatrical gross, with the lion's share going to American films. Ironically, many of these were shot on soundstages and locations in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver because the favorable exchange rate, combined with lower wages, tax breaks, and subsidies, made it approximately 35 percent cheaper for an American film to be shot in Canada than in the United States. (Canada's other attractions include a wide variety of locations, skilled film crews, and state-of-the-art postproduction facilities in the same time zones as New York and Los Angeles, all conveniently accessible by air.)

The Directors Guild of America (DGA) and the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) claimed that 23,500 film jobs were lost to "runaway production" in 1998, a full 80 percent of them to Canada, which collected $2.5 billion in production costs from American film companies. The inverse corollary, no less striking, is this: in 2000, Telefilm Canada supported the production of forty-six domestic features by contributing $15.4 million to their $89.2 million combined budgets. This means that the entire budget for a full year of Canadian production was equivalent to the budget of single major Hollywood-produced feature. This kind of economic disparity is one reason the government of Quebec has threatened to amend the Quebec Cinema Act to require that all non-French films be dubbed into that language for distribution, erecting one small barrier to entry against the American majors.

However, a number of homemade Québecois blockbusters were produced in the 2000s, and they began to dominate their own market by mid-decade, putting American blockbusters in second place for the first time. Furthermore, during the 2010s, Québecois films received three consecutive nominations in the American Academy's Foreign Language category—for *Incendies* (2010), *Monsieur Lazhar* (2011), and *War Witch* (2012).



Maria Schneider and Marlon Brando in *Ultimo tango a Parigi* (*Last Tango in Paris*; Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972).



15

European Renaissance: West

The Second Italian Film Renaissance

Like the American, French, and British cinemas, Italian cinema experienced a creative decline during the 1950s, as the neorealist impulse died out and the studios returned to the business of producing mass entertainment. Visconti, Rossellini, and De Sica continued to make serious films, but as elsewhere, the industry's emphasis was on spectacle and mildly titillating sex. The 1950s were largely a period of "rosy realism" in the Italian film—a mode that might best be understood as a merging of *telefono bianco* and neorealism—and the decade witnessed the appearance of such international sex symbols as Sophia Loren, Gina Lollobrigida, and Marcello Mastroianni. Yet two figures were working within the domestic cinema at this time who would create the second postwar Italian film renaissance—Federico Fellini (1920–1993) and Michelangelo Antonioni (1912–2007).

Federico Fellini

Formerly a newspaper cartoonist, Fellini began his film career as a scriptwriter for Rossellini. His early films as a director were very much in the orthodox neorealist tradition, but *I vitelloni* (*The Loafers/The Young and the Passionate,*



Giulietta Masina and Anthony Quinn in *La strada* (*The Road*; Federico Fellini, 1954).

1953) was the first to reveal remarkable feeling for character and atmosphere. This episodic study of aimless young loafers in the seaside resort town of Rimini, where Fellini grew up, contains semiautobiographical elements and is one of his finest achievements.

With *La strada* (*The Road*, 1954), Fellini made a break with neorealism to tell the story of a simple-minded peasant girl who is sold to a circus strongman for a plate of pasta. Realistic in form but essentially allegorical in content, *La strada* was attacked by leftist critics for betraying the social commitment of neorealism. Nevertheless, it attracted worldwide attention and won a Silver Lion, the second-highest honor, at the prestigious Venice Film Festival in 1954. By the time he made *La strada*, Fellini had assembled about him the group of collaborators with whom he was to work for most of his career: his co-scenarists, Ennio Flaiano and Tullio Pinelli; his director of photography, Otello Martelli; his composer, Nino Rota; and his leading lady, Giulietta Masina, who was also his wife.

Fellini's next film was *Il bidone* (*The Swindle*, 1955); like *La strada*, it was realistic in style but symbolic in content. This tale of two-bit swindlers who victimize the poor has an aura of tragedy about it and contains a number of surreal touches that adumbrate Fellini's later concern with psychology and myth. *Le notti di Cabiria* (*Nights of Cabiria*, 1956), which Fellini wrote with the Marxist poet and future director Pier Paolo Pasolini, again has Giulietta Masina as the central figure. Here she plays a plucky, indomitable Roman prostitute who is betrayed and robbed by the young man she loves but who nevertheless has the spirit to begin life anew.

After a hiatus of nearly four years, Fellini produced *La dolce vita* (1960), his first film in widescreen and a turning point in his work. This film concerns the life of a Roman journalist and press agent (Marcello Mastroianni) as he seeks sensational stories and hobnobs with the international jet set. Its superficially realistic milieu is corruption and decadence, and its

(right) Anita Ekberg in *La dolce vita* (Federico Fellini, 1960).



visual extravagance borders on the fantastic. The film begins with a long traveling shot of a statue of Christ being flown by helicopter over the city and ends at the seashore with the capture of a monstrous dead fish. *La dolce vita* brought Fellini international recognition as a major artist and a new master of widescreen composition.

With *Otto e mezzo* (*8½*, 1963)—so named because it was his eighth-and-a-half film, the "half" having been his contributions to the anthology films *Amore in città* (1953) and *Boccaccio '70* (1962)—Fellini moved directly into the world of self-reflexive fantasy. In *8½*, Guido (Mastroianni), a film director who seems to represent Fellini himself, has undertaken a large-scale production but runs out of creative energy in the process. This blockage plunges him (and us) into a subconscious dream world of nightmares, fantasies, and flashbacks that interpenetrates his perceptions of the present and jumbles narrative logic. This surrealistic parable of the agony of artistic creation won many international awards. Although it has been called a twentieth-century version of Dante's *Inferno*, it is ultimately about the process of its own making.

In *Giulietta degli spiriti* (*Juliet of the Spirits*, 1965), his first feature in color, Fellini focused on a woman (played by Masina) who, like Guido in *8½*, collapses into a world of fantasy under the pressure of an unpleasant external reality—her husband's infidelity and the dominance of her glamorous mother and sisters. In *Fellini Satyricon* (1969), a flamboyant, personalized version of a classical epic paean to hedonism, he created a nightmarish portrait of the decadence of ancient Rome. In *Fellini Roma* (1972), stunningly photographed by Giuseppe Rotunno, the director continued to explore his preoccupation with subjective history in an impressionistic study of Rome that combined stylized documentary with Fellini's own memories of the city as a youth.

His next major work, *Amarcord* (1974; the title is regional dialect for "I remember"), is about a young man growing up in the seaside town of Rimini some forty years earlier. More directly autobiographical than *I vitelloni*, it provided Fellini with breathing space before he undertook a spectacular English-language version of Casanova's memoirs (*Casanova*, 1976)—a film more controversial with the critics for its glacially sumptuous tableaux than even *Fellini Satyricon*. During the 1980s, Fellini made approximately one feature every two years, the most important of which were *E la nave va* (*And the Ship Sails On*, 1983) and *Ginger e Fred* (*Ginger and Fred*, 1986), both satires about the decline of cinema, the rise of contemporary television, and its cult of instant celebrity. The last film Fellini completed before his death in 1993 was *La voce della luna* (*The Voice of the Moon*, 1990), which returns to the popular culture of his provincial youth to make a comic, if pessimistic, plea for a quieter, less technocentric world.

Deeply influenced by neorealism in the formlessness and circularity of his narratives, Fellini structured his work through the sheer force of his own personality and obsessions. To use one of his favorite images, Fellini was first and foremost a great ringmaster whose circus was the human comedy, as it existed both inside and outside himself. His theme was the mystery of identity (often his own or that of the characters played by Giulietta Masina), and he learned to tap a large portion of the cinema's vast but generally unrealized potential to objectify subjective states, and vice versa. Fellini's rich frescoes and intoxicating images create a stylized world of mental fantasy in which reality is reinterpreted and made significant by the imagination of the artist.

Michelangelo Antonioni

Michelangelo Antonioni, similar to Fellini, began his career in film as a neorealist. The son of a wealthy businessman, he attended the Centro Sperimentale della Cinematografia in Rome and wrote criticism for *Cinema*. In 1942, he collaborated on the script of Rossellini's *Un pilota ritorna* and served as an assistant to Marcel Carné on *Les visiteurs du soir*. His first films as a director were bleak and uncompromising neorealist documentary shorts, but his first features broke away from neorealist conventions to examine the middle-class milieu with which he was most familiar. They all dealt with social displacement and alienation, key themes in Antonioni's later work.

In his first major feature, *Le amiche* (*The Girlfriends*, 1955), a pessimistic study of the alienated bourgeois women of Turin, Antonioni announced a new style, one that abandoned traditional plotting for a series of seemingly random events and that connected his characters intimately with their environment through the long take, or sequence shot, as opposed to montage. Use of the long take in *Le amiche*, which won the Silver Lion at Venice in 1955, enabled Antonioni to render the duration of real time on the screen and emphasize the overwhelming importance of the material environment on the interior lives of his characters—the two main components of his mature style. In *Il grido* (*The Cry*, 1957),



Eleonora Rossi Drago, Valentina Cortese, Anna Maria Pancani, and Yvonne Furneaux in *Le amiche* (*The Girlfriends*; Michelangelo Antonioni, 1955).

Antonioni turned briefly from the bourgeois milieu to portray the doomed journey of a factory worker and his daughter across the desolate wasteland of the Po Valley. Here, as in *Le amiche*, Antonioni used the physical environment of his film to express the psychology of the characters. Yet it was with *L'avventura* (*The Adventure*, 1960) that Antonioni achieved his first great masterpiece of mise-en-scène.

The first film in his brilliant trilogy about displacement and alienation in the modern world, and his first film in widescreen, *L'avventura* concerns a yachting party of rich Italians who land on a deserted volcanic island in the Mediterranean. A young woman, Anna, quarrels with her lover, Sandro, the leader of the party, and then mysteriously disappears. Anna's best friend, Claudia (played by Monica Vitti, who starred in Antonioni's next three films), and Sandro, both of whom have been marginal figures in the film up to this point, search the island for her and can find no trace. At Claudia's instigation, they return to mainland Sicily and continue their search, but they ultimately forget the missing woman and become lovers. The lack of final resolution and the seeming aimlessness of the narrative caused *L'avventura* to be jeered at the 1960 Cannes Festival, but it received the Jury Prize, and the impact of its revolutionary style was soon felt around the world.

For one thing, Antonioni used the sequence shot in *L'avventura* to equate film time with **real time**—every scene in the film, whether edited or not, takes the same amount of time to occur on the screen as it would in empirical reality. He also employed widescreen deep focus to link his characters inexorably with their oppressive surroundings. Both techniques have the



Monica Vitti in *L'avventura* (*The Adventure*; Michelangelo Antonioni, 1960).

effect of transferring the psychological experience of the characters to the audience, because both groups are required to perceive time and space in precisely the same terms, unmediated by expressive montage. Thus, we experience the long and tedious search for Anna, first on the island and later on Sicily, very much as do Sandro and Claudia—at first with interest and anticipation, then with desperation, and finally with disgust and boredom, which leads us to forget the object of the search altogether and concentrate on the relationship of the searchers, just as do the searchers themselves. From one moment to the next, Antonioni never permits us to know any more about the mystery of Anna's disappearance (or about the mystery of their own relationship) than do Sandro and Claudia, and when the film ends with these mysteries unresolved, we realize that the psychological "adventure" of the characters has been made our own.

Antonioni continued his trilogy on what he calls "the great emotional sickness of our era" with *La notte* (*The Night*, 1960), a film about the growing estrangement of a successful novelist and his wife, and the alienation of both from the vacuous environment of modern industrial Milan. *L'eclisse* (*The Eclipse*, 1962), a brilliant conclusion to the trilogy, offered Antonioni's most sustained vision of the disorder and incoherence of modern existence. In Rome, two lovers conclude an affair, having "nothing left to say to each other," and the woman drifts into another affair with her mother's handsome young stockbroker. This affair, too, leads toward estrangement, and the film concludes with a seven-minute montage sequence of fifty-eight shots showing places in the city from late afternoon to nightfall where the lovers have met regularly during the course of the film but in which neither of them now appears. Their unexplained disappearance (and our mute acceptance of it) is a chilling reminder of the fragility and impermanence of personal relationships and provides the perfect coda for a trilogy whose theme is the hopelessness of love in the modern age.

In *Il deserto rosso* (*The Red Desert*, 1964), his first color film and winner of the Golden Lion at Venice in 1964, Antonioni portrayed the neurotic wife of a wealthy engineer searching for meaning in the industrial wasteland of Ravenna. Her sense of personal dislocation and the chaotic impingement of industry on nature are both heightened by Antonioni's impressionist/expressionist use of color, the first of its kind in the history of film. Great poisonous clouds of yellow smoke billow from the factories, ships pass continuously in the background through the gray mists of the harbor, and chemical dyes give a nightmarish cast



Alain Delon and Monica Vitti in *L'eclisse* (*The Eclipse*; Michelangelo Antonioni, 1962).

to the industrial wastes and slag heaps that intrude on the natural landscape of the town. Antonioni created a foreshortened perspective for this nightmare world by using telephoto lenses in excess of 100mm to eliminate depth of field and heighten the film's abstraction.

Antonioni also used color symbolically in *Blow-Up* (1966), an abstract and mystifying film about a fashion photographer in "swinging" London who seems to have inadvertently photographed a murder in the background of some random shots he has taken of an anonymous woman in a park. As he "blows up" the telltale prints to greater and greater scale, objective reality becomes pure abstraction, and the film ends by suggesting that modern experience, even (or, perhaps, especially) when rendered visible on film, is not subject to interpretation and is, therefore, meaningless. *Blow-Up* was Antonioni's first film to reach a large popular audience, and its commercial success led to his filming of *Zabriskie Point* for MGM in America in 1970. Shot partly on location in Death Valley, this beautiful color film was an attempt to suggest the decadence of American society through the fantasies of the revolutionary young.

After *Zabriskie Point*, the film's producer, Carlo Ponti, asked Antonioni to shoot a suspense thriller about a man who changes his identity. The result was not a thriller at all but a despairing existential meditation on the uselessness of human individuality, titled *Professione: Reporter* (English title: *The Passenger*, 1975). Set in exotic international locations, *The Passenger* concerns a television news reporter at midlife who finds a corpse in a Moroccan hotel and assumes the identity of the dead man. This desperate bid for self-liberation ends in disaster when the dead man turns out to have been a political operative dangerously involved in a guerrilla war. Filmed as a series of long takes and concluding with an elaborate seven-minute zoom-and-tracking shot in which the death of the reporter is obliquely implied, rather than observed, *The Passenger* was Antonioni's last major work before his death.

Although a cerebral hemorrhage suffered in 1985 prevented him from working for a decade, in the course of his career he had tenaciously maintained his integrity and independence to become a poet of the modern



David Hemmings and Veruschka von Lehndorff in *Blow-Up* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966).

individual's estrangement from his environment and of his tragic inability to communicate with others and with himself. His films contain little dialogue and less music, implying the virtual irrelevance of human communication, but they make brilliant use of naturalistic sound and silence to emphasize his characters' isolation in a seemingly random, if not hostile, universe. Antonioni was, by his own account, more concerned with behavior than with story, and he lets the situations of his films grow out of the personalities and surroundings of his characters, rather than imposing situations through plot. His oblique and languorous narrative style, with its simultaneous capacity for distancing and involvement, has decisively influenced the development of modern widescreen cinema.

Ermanno Olmi, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Bernardo Bertolucci

While Fellini and Antonioni were becoming acknowledged masters of international cinema during the 1960s, a second generation of postwar Italian directors was coming to prominence. Ermanno Olmi (b. 1931) was the young filmmaker most clearly in the neorealist tradition, although the slow-paced, elliptical style of his narratives brings him close to the later Antonioni. After making some forty documentaries in Milan between 1952 and 1959, Olmi established an international reputation in his narrative feature *Il posto* (*The Job/The Sound of Trumpets*, 1961). This sympathetic, insightful, and wistfully comic film concerns a young man from the provinces who takes a tedious job as a clerk with a large industrial firm in Milan. It contrasts the systematically dehumanizing nature of the job with his own naïve happiness at finding a place for himself in a complex, urbanized world. Like the films of Olmi's neorealist predecessors, *Il posto* was shot entirely on location with a cast of nonprofessional actors, and it is virtually plotless.

Un certo giorno (*One Fine Day*, 1969), his finest film to date, concerns a successful advertising executive who kills a man in an automobile accident and, in an attempt to make some sense of it, is forced to reexamine the course of his entire life. In the end, he is acquitted of his crime through the services of a smart lawyer and once more succumbs to bourgeois insensitivity. With *Durante l'estate* (*In the Summertime*, 1971), Olmi moved toward romantic fantasy in the visually sumptuous tale of a forger whose rich inner life lends him dignity and significance. As always, Olmi's surface



Brunetto Del Vita in *Un certo giorno* (*One Fine Day*; Ermanno Olmi, 1969).

realism here is informed by a sense of the sad and absurd comedy of everyday life.

His other films of the 1970s are *La circostanza* (*The Circumstance*, 1974) and *L'albero degli zoccoli* (*The Tree of Wooden Clogs*, 1978). The latter was filmed as a three-part, hundred-and-eighty-minute television series on peasant survival in the late nineteenth century, and was produced, written, directed, photographed, and edited by Olmi himself.

The Marxist poet, novelist, and essayist Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–1975), who had worked with Fellini on the script of *Le notti di Cabiria* (1956), made his first two films in the neorealist tradition but later rejected it in favor of what he called an "epical religious," or mythic, vision of experience. *Accattone* (*The Beggar*, 1961) and *Mamma Roma* (1962) were tough, uncompromising studies of Roman low-life. Filmed on location with mostly nonprofessional actors, they contained none of the sentimentality that sometimes marred the neorealist films of Rossellini and De Sica.

The magnificent *Il vangelo secondo Matteo* (*The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, 1964) was a semi-documentary reconstruction of the life of Christ from the Annunciation to the Resurrection that implicitly examined the relationship between the Marxist dialectic and Christian myth. This stark but brilliant work, shot in *cinéma vérité* style by Tonino Delli Colli (who would become Pasolini's regular cinematographer thenceforth) with nonprofessional actors, stands today as the most dynamic version of the gospel story ever filmed.

As the 1960s progressed, Pasolini turned more and more to allegory and myth. *Uccellacci e uccellini* (English title: *Hawks and Sparrows*, 1966) was, to use Pasolini's term, an "ideo-comic" film about the course of Italian Marxism. In *Edipo re* (*Oedipus Rex*, 1967), shot on location in Morocco, Pasolini set Sophocles' tragedy in a primitive region analogous to the unconscious mind and framed it with a contemporary Freudian prologue and epilogue, in order "to project psychology onto myth."

Teorema (*Theorem*, 1968) and *Porcile* (*Pigsty*, 1969) were both major works in Pasolini's mythico-ideological mode, establishing him as a filmmaker of great



intellectual importance. *Teorema* is a mythical allegory set among the bourgeoisie that equates religious experience with sex, but its companion piece, *Porcile*, goes even further in its attack on the religious and political hypocrisies of bourgeois culture. The film proceeds by intercutting two savage and revolting parables of capitalism—one about a band of medieval cannibals who live in the hills and eat the flesh of kidnapped travelers, the other about a wealthy contemporary West German industrialist who has made his fortune from the Holocaust and whose demented son loves intercourse with pigs. At the end of the film, the cannibals are ripped apart by wild dogs at the instigation of the local police authorities, and the German youth is eaten by his pigs.

After shooting an extraordinary version of Euripides' *Medea* (1969) in Turkey, Pasolini abandoned the surrealist satire of the 1960s to make a "trilogy of life," as he called it, by adapting three of the world's great works of literature: Boccaccio's *Il decamerone* (*Decameron*, 1971), Chaucer's *I racconti di Canterbury* (*Canterbury Tales*, 1972), and *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* (*A Thousand and One Nights/ The Arabian Nights,* 1974), shot on location in Italy, England, and Iran, respectively.

His last film was *Salò o le centoventi giornate di Sodoma* (English title: *The 120 Days of Sodom*, 1975), a version of de Sade's bizarre pornographic epic, which Pasolini updated and set in the Salò Republic of Italy during the last days of Fascist rule. An important theoretician of film in many published essays, as well as a brilliant director, Pasolini at his best succeeded in creating an intellectual cinema in which metaphor, myth, and narrative form all subserved materialist ideology. By a grim irony, given his vision of the human race as a "pigsty," Pasolini's remarkable career was cut short in the fall of 1975, when he was murdered by a young thug who claimed that the director had made sexual advances toward him.

Bernardo Bertolucci (b. 1940), Pasolini's assistant on *Accattone*, has gone on to become the most significant new director to emerge from the Italian cinema of the 1960s. It was *Prima della rivoluzione* (*Before the Revolution*, 1964), a visually complex and intelligent film about a young man's struggle to break free of bourgeois values, that brought the young director to international attention. *Il conformista* (*The Conformist*, 1970), from a novel by Alberto Moravia, explores the psychology of a young man who is hired by Italian Fascists to assassinate his former professor in France. It brilliantly equates sexual disorder, social decadence, and the authoritarian personality.

Bertolucci's controversial *Ultimo tango a Parigi* (*Last Tango in Paris*, 1972) is less complex than *Il conformista*, but similar to its predecessor, it employs an Expressionistic color scheme and a disjointed narrative style to take us into the mind of a man deranged by grief, where sex, pain, and death have all melded. In 1987, Bertolucci directed a film of unique visual splendor in *The Last Emperor*, the winner of multiple international prizes, including nine American Academy Awards. This Italian-Chinese-British co-production, a biography of Pu Yi, the last imperial ruler of China, was sumptuously photographed by Vittorio Storaro (b. 1940), cost $25 million, and employed some 19,000 extras.

(left) Enrique Irazoqui in *Il vangelo secondo Matteo* (*The Gospel According to St. Matthew*; Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1964).

Other Italian Auteurs

Other important figures in the new Italian cinema are Marco Bellocchio (b. 1939), Francesco Rosi (1922–2015), Vittorio De Seta (1923–2011), Elio Petri (1929–1982), and Gillo Pontecorvo (1919–2006). Bellocchio's savage *I pugni in tasca* (*Fist in the Pocket*) shocked Italy in 1965 with its portrait of a young epileptic who makes a rational choice to murder off the members of his diseased bourgeois family. The director's complex and outrageously funny political satire *La Cina è vicina* (*China Is Near*, 1967) launched another frontal assault on bourgeois values and shared the Venice Jury Prize in 1967 with Godard's *La Chinoise*.

In his adaptation of Pirandello's *Enrico IV* (*Henry IV*, 1984), Bellocchio returned to the theme of his 1974 documentary *Matti da slegare* (*Fit to Be Untied*; co-directed with Silvano Agosti, Sandro Petraglia, and Stefano Rulli), on the sanity of those socially defined—and institutionalized—as being mad. Here, Marcello Mastroianni gives a brilliant performance as a nobleman who is thrown from his horse on his way to a costume party—a trauma that apparently induces the delusion that he is the medieval monarch of the Holy Roman Empire and causes his family to isolate him in royal splendor in the ancestral castle for twenty years. Subsequently, Bellocchio directed *Il diavolo in corpo* (1986), an erotic, apolitical version of Raymond



Marta Lado and Jean-Louis Trintignant in *Il conformista* (*The Conformist*; Bernardo Bertolucci, 1970).

Radiguet's novel *La diable au corps* (*The Devil in the Flesh*), which had been adapted twice previously.

Francesco Rosi, a former assistant to both Visconti and Antonioni, came into his own with *Salvatore Giuliano* (1962), a semi-documentary account of the real-life career of a bandit and folk hero and his murder by the authorities in postwar Sicily. Shot on location with nonprofessional actors, the film has an extremely elliptical narrative structure that moves back and forth in time with the facility of Bertolucci's *Il conformista*. Rosi subsequenty proved himself to be a director of great social commitment and a legitimate heir to neorealism. His *Le mani sulla città* (*Hands over the City*, 1963) is a powerful political film shot on location in documentary style about the corrupt relationship between real-estate development and modern city planning.

A proposito Lucky (English title: *Lucky Luciano*, 1973) attempts to show the link between American and

Sicilian gangsters and governments, and *Cadaveri eccellenti* (*Illustrious Corpses*, 1976), a characteristic film of political murder and intrigue, won many international prizes. In 1980, Rosi completed work on a four-hour television film (which was also released as a two-and-a-half-hour theatrical feature), based on Carlo Levi's 1945 memoir of political exile, *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (*Christ Stopped at Eboli*; English title: *Eboli*, 1979). This award-winning film was followed by *Cronaca di una morte annunciata* (*Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, 1987), another stunning critical success. This adaptation of Gabriel García Márquez's fantastic novel of love and death in a sleepy Colombian river town circa 1950 was magnificently shot on location by Rosi's regular cinematographer, Pasqualino De Santis (1927–1996), with newly improved Super-Technirama cameras.

The Sicilian-born director Vittorio De Seta, who wrote and photographed his own films, made independent documentaries before directing *Banditi a Orgosolo* (*Bandits of Orgosolo*, 1961), a semi-documentary feature shot on location with nonactors, about a Sardinian shepherd who joins a group of revolutionary bandits. The film influenced the development of *cinéma vérité* camera styles in both Italy and France, but De Seta did little significant work afterwards.

Elio Petri began his career as a scriptwriter for Giuseppe De Santis and Carlo Lizzani during the last days of the neorealist movement, but he later developed into a subtle filmmaker with a sensuous and elliptical visual style of his own. Petri was a Marxist, and his most characteristic films are social satires cast in the form of conventional genre pieces, such as *L'assassino* (*The Assassin*, 1961), *La decima vittima* (*The Tenth Victim*, 1965), and his flamboyant analysis of the contemporary fascist personality, *Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto* (*Investigation of a Citizen above Suspicion*, 1970). In the 1970s, Petri became more aggressively political in films such as *La classe operaia va in paradiso* (*The Working Class Goes to Heaven*, 1972), winner of the Cannes Grand Prix.

Gillo Pontecorvo was a film journalist and an assistant to Yves Allégret before turning to narrative cinema in 1960 with *Kapo*, a semi-documentary account of a young Jewish girl in Auschwitz who collaborates with the SS. After that, most of Pontecorvo's films were scrupulously researched documentary reconstructions of historical events, using authentic locations and nonactors. His most significant work was the remarkable *La battaglia di Algeri* (*The Battle of Algiers*, 1966), which employed the whole city and most of its population to reconstruct with verisimilitude the horrific events leading up to the liberation of Algeria. Financed by the Algerian government, the film won the Golden Lion at Venice in 1966. Impressive but less successful was *Queimada!* (*Burn!*, 1969), an attempt to probe the dynamics of colonial exploitation in the context of a nineteenth-century slave revolt on a Caribbean sugar plantation.

Finally, some note should be taken of the important role played by state-operated Italian television, RAI, in the production of major feature films. During the 1970s, distinguished directors such as Fellini (*I clowns*, 1970), Antonioni (*Chung kuo/Cina*, 1972), Bertolucci (*La strategia del ragno*, 1970), Olmi (*I recuperanti*, 1969), and Rossellini (*Socrate*, 1970) all made films for RAI, often in collaboration with foreign television networks, as did Francesco Rosi, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, and Ettore Scola in the 1980s. RAI also commissioned features during the 1970s from such promising young directors as Nelo Risi, Gianni Amico, Adriano Aprà, and Liliana Cavani. Private television networks—the most powerful of which were created by media baron Silvio Berlusconi—began to appear in the 1980s, and they largely usurped RAI's role in film production (see below).

Cavani (b. 1933) emerged as a filmmaker of some importance with the notoriety of *Il portiere di notte* (*The Night Porter*, 1974), a sadomasochistic love story that attempts to dissect the culture of fascism, and *Al di là del bene e del male* (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 1977), which re-creates the last mad years of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in scatological detail. Other notable Italian filmmakers who entered their major productive period during the 1970s are Marco Ferreri (1928–1997), Ettore Scola (b. 1931), the Taviani brothers—Paolo (b. 1931) and Vittorio (b. 1929)—and Lina Wertmüller (b. 1928).

Ferreri, who also worked in France and the United States, was a surrealist social critic in the mode of Buñuel, whose characters often end up committing unpremeditated murder, as in *Dillinger è morto* (*Dillinger Is Dead*, 1968); or self-mutilation, as in *La dernière femme* (*The Last Woman*, 1976) and *Chiedo asilo* (*My Asylum*, 1979). His most characteristic films of the decade were *La grande bouffe/ La grande abbuffata* (*Blow-Out*, 1973), in which four gourmets gorge themselves and die, surrounded by their own excrement and vomit; and *Bye Bye Monkey* (1978), an allegory about the extinction of the human race, set in New York. *Storie di ordinaria follia* (*Tales of Ordinary Madness*, 1981), adapted from stories by poet Charles Bukowski, depicts the 1960s Los



Andréa Ferréol and Philippe Noiret in *La grande bouffe/La grande abbuffata* (*Blow-Out*; Marco Ferreri, 1973).

Angeles counterculture as a sleazy pit of self-destructive impulse.

Ettore Scola was a scriptwriter who began directing comedies in the 1960s and achieved international critical acclaim with *C'eravamo tanto amati* (*We All Loved Each Other So Much*, 1975), an ambitious film that intertwines an examination of the myriad social and economic changes Italy has undergone since the end of World War II with a history of postwar Italian cinema as it has reflected and sometimes catalyzed those changes. *C'eravamo* is dedicated to Vittorio De Sica, and *Brutti, sporchi, e cattivi* (*Dirty, Mean, and Nasty/Down and Dirty*, 1976), a parody of that director's *Miracolo a Milano* (1950), shows the urban poor to be not a happy-go-lucky, socially cohesive group, but hopelessly atomized and infected with capitalist greed.

Una giornata particolare (*A Special Day*, 1977) recounts a chance meeting between two lonely outsiders—a weary housewife (Sophia Loren) and an antifascist homosexual journalist (Marcello Mastroianni)—on May 6, 1938, the occasion of Hitler's visit to Rome to sign the Axis alliance treaty with Mussolini. Scola's reputation as an international figure was resoundingly confirmed by *La nuit de Varennes* (1982), a comedy of ideas that brings together Casanova, Thomas Paine, and Restif de La Bretonne on June 20, 1791, the day of the abortive flight of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette from the Tuileries.

The Taviani brothers directed a number of openly political films during the 1960s, such as *Un uomo da bruciare* (*A Man for Burning*, 1962) and *I sovversivi* (*The Subversives*, 1967), before turning to a concern with the evolution of the "decent core" of society in the 1970s. *Allonsanfan* (1974)—an Italian mispronunciation of the first two words of the French national anthem, "Allons enfants . . ."—is set in post-Napoleonic Italy, where the Jacobins fight it out with the Freemasons over the purity of revolutionary ideals.

Padre padrone (*Father Master*, 1977), originally produced for Italian television, brought the Tavianis the Palme d'Or at Cannes, the New York Film Festival award, and international renown. This complex work, based on Gavino Ledda's autobiographical account of how he rose from the illiterate Sardinian peasantry to become a professor of linguistics, weaves fact and fiction, subjective sound and concrete image, to create a narrative that is at once emotionally satisfying and ideologically persuasive. The Tavianis scored another triumph with *La notte di San Lorenzo* (*The Night of Shooting Stars*, 1982), which depicts the successful struggle of a small rural community to survive a massacre by the Germans in 1944, based on an actual atrocity that took place in their hometown. Since then, the brothers have written and directed *Kaos* (*Chaos*, 1984), an anthology of five episodes adapted from the novels of Pirandello; *Good Morning, Babilonia* (*Good Morning, Babylon*, 1987), an original film in which two Italian immigrant brothers impersonate master masons to get jobs as set designers on D. W. Griffith's epic spectacle *Intolerance* (1916); and *Cesare deve morire* (*Caesar Must Die*, 2012), in which the inmates of a maximum-security prison stage a performance of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

Lina Wertmüller, who became something of a cult figure in the United States during the 1970s, began her film career as an assistant to Fellini on *8½* (1963). That year she directed her first feature, a sociocomedy of Italian provincial life titled *I basilischi* (*The Lizards*). She continued to make intelligent comic films for the domestic market until she scored her first international success with *Film d'amore e d'anarchia* (*Love and Anarchy*, 1973), an ironic examination of sex and politics in Fascist Italy, focusing on the attempts of a bungling anarchist (played by Giancarlo Giannini, a Wertmüller regular) to assassinate Mussolini. *Mimí metallurgico ferito nell'onore* (*Mimi the Metalworker/The Seduction of Mimi*, 1972) and *Tutto a posto e niente in ordine* (*Everything's in Order but Nothing Works/All Screwed Up*, 1974) also deal with the situations of hopeless underdogs (both played by Giannini) pitted against the system, and both carry the connection between sex and politics one step further.

The ultimate statement of that connection, however, is *Travolti da un insolito destino nell'azzurro mare d'agosto* (*Swept Away by an Unusual Destiny in the Blue Sea of August/Swept Away*, 1974), in which a wealthy woman and a deckhand are swept away by a storm from a pleasure yacht to a desert island, where their roles as master and slave are temporarily reversed. Eventually, the two fall in love, but when they return to society their old roles reassert themselves. Many feminist critics were disturbed by the film's ironic balance, but such irony is precisely Wertmüller's stock in trade as an artist.

As proof, we have *Pasqualino settebellezze* (English title: *Seven Beauties*, 1976), a physically sumptuous paean to survival ethics set largely in a Nazi concentration camp, where the Giannini character, an Italian army deserter, spends the duration of World War II. This complex film is by turns beautiful and repellent, because we are asked to identify with a protagonist who possesses the moral sensibility of a cockroach, as well as the knack of surviving like one. The moral relativism of *Seven Beauties* outraged as many liberal critics as *Swept Away* did feminists, because both films seemed to endorse patriarchal fascism.



Giancarlo Giannini and Mariangela Melato in *Travolti da un insolito destino nell'azzurro mare d'agosto* (*Swept Away by an Unusual Destiny in the Blue Sea of August/Swept Away*; Lina Wertmüller, 1974).



Giorgio Cantarini and Roberto Benigni in *La vita è bella* (*Life Is Beautiful*; Roberto Benigni, 1997).

The most significant development for Italian cinema in the 1980s was the emergence of a new generation of talented comedy directors whose roots reach back to the traditions of commedia dell'arte but whose social consciousness and filmic technique are firmly grounded in contemporary reality. This group includes Maurizio Nichetti (b. 1948), whose brilliant surrealist pantomime *Ratataplan* (the word imitates the sound of a drum roll to Italian ears) swept the awards at Venice in 1979.

Nanni Moretti (b. 1953) began making films in Super 8, and his first hit was the 16mm *Ecce Bombo* (1978), a parody of traditional Italian film comedy that, similar to the work of Nichetti, owed much to American silent slapstick, as well as to the satiric wit of Woody Allen and Mel Brooks.

Carlo Verdone (b. 1950) has been successful with such episodic film sketches in Roman dialect as *White, Red, and Verdone* (1981; with the director's name replacing the *verde* of the Italian tricolored flag) and many more. In fact, Verdone wrote, directed, and starred in an average of one film a year between 1979 and 2000, making him the most prolific of all of the Italian directors discussed in this chapter.

Massimo Troisi (1953–1994), whose *Ricomincio da tre* (*I'm Starting Over from Three*) was a smash hit in 1981, made low-budget films in the Neapolitan dialect; most recently, he teamed with the Tuscan dialect comic Roberto Benigni to produce *La vita è bella* (*Life Is Beautiful*, 1997). This comedy, set in a Nazi concentration camp, convinced many critics that Benigni was a serious artist, and it won several Oscars and the Jury Prize at Cannes. Like Nichetti, Moretti, and Verdone, Troisi not only wrote and directed his films, but also played leading roles in them.

A final comic filmmaker of note is the prolific Bolognese director Pupi Avati (b. 1938). Though of an older generation than the quartet discussed previously, Avati came to filmmaking relatively late. He is best known for the highly original musical about Italy's fascination with American culture *Aiutami a sognare* (*Help Me Dream*, 1981).

Popular Cinema in Italy

Although they brought international prestige to the Italian cinema, art-film directors such as Fellini and Antonioni did not sustain the industry financially during the 1960s and the 1970s. No account of Italian cinema after neorealism would be complete without a discussion of three exploitation genres that became financial mainstays for both studios and independent producers during this period—the "peplum" epics, the "spaghetti" Westerns, and the Italian horror film, especially the subtype known as the *giallo* and its clones. These genres were not only important in an industrial and economic sense, but—similar to Hollywood B-films of the 1930s and the 1940s and the youth-cult exploitation films produced by AIP during the 1950s and the 1960s—they provided the training ground for many directors who later became prominent figures in the mainstream cinema.

With roots in the Italian pre–World War I superspectacle, the peplum films (named for the short skirts worn by the protagonists, both male and female) were sword-and-sandal epics with plots inspired by classical mythology and heroes drawn from the ancient world—for example, Hercules, Ulysses, and Spartacus—who were often played by American bodybuilders such as Steve Reeves; 170 such films were produced by the Italian industry between 1957 and 1964, representing 10 percent of national production. The first was *Le fatiche di Ercole* (*The Labors of Hercules*; Pietro Francisci, 1957), imported into the United States by Joseph E. Levine as *Hercules* in 1959, which grossed an astonishing $18 million. This success led to the creation of multiple peplum franchises—the original Hercules series (1958–1965), the Maciste series (1959–1965), and the Ursus series (1960–1962); the latter two were based on characters from the paradigmatic superspectacle *Cabiria* (1914).

As the peplum cycle was winding down, Cinecittà began to make Westerns to fill the void left by Hollywood when it abandoned the genre to television. Cinecittà made approximately twenty-five of them, using some of the same creative personnel as were used in the peplum epics, before Sergio Leone (1929–1989) set the standard for the genre in his Dollars trilogy, starring Clint Eastwood as the Man with No Name. Leone is usually credited with establishing an international market for the Italo-Western, some 400 of which were produced between 1963 and 1973, dominating Italian film exports for a decade. Leone's trilogy—*Per un pugno di dollari* (*A Fistful of Dollars*, 1964), *Per qualche dollaro in più* (*For a Few Dollars More*, 1965), and *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* (*The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, 1966)—contain all of the hallmarks of the classical spaghetti Western: baroque framings, an emphasis on duration through both the long take and montage, an electronically synthesized score (in this case, by the innovative and distinguished Ennio Morricone), a Latinate cast and a Mexican setting (here represented by Spanish locations), and an emphasis on sudden and shocking violence.



Kirk Douglas in *Ulysses* (Mario Camerini, 1954), an upscale example of the peplum film.

Leone's ironic stylization of American myths continued though two more Westerns—*C'era una volta il West* (*Once Upon a Time in the West*, 1968) and *Giù la testa* (*A Fistful of Dynamite/Duck, You Sucker!*, 1971)—and a gangster epic, *C'era una volta in America* (*Once Upon a Time in America*, 1984); and he is today regarded as a major figure in postwar Italian cinema. In addition to the enormous influence of Leone's successful formula on filmmakers in Italy (there were more than four hundred imitations, in dozens of successful series), the Italian Western had an enormous influence on American filmmakers as diverse as Sam Peckinpah, Ralph Nelson, and Robert Altman, and it raised the bar on the graphic depiction of violence in cinema generally.

So, too, did the Italian horror film, especially the *giallo*, which codified the psychoslasher genre and


Sergio Leone's
Klassischer
Meisterwestern
Für
eine Handvoll
Dollar

(left) Marianne Koch and Clint Eastwood in a German-language poster for *A Fistful of Dollars* (Sergio Leone, 1964).

made its transgressive gore acceptable to mainstream audiences. The Italian horror cinema came into being at the same time as the peplum epic—it can be dated from the appearance of Riccardo Freda's *I vampiri* (*The Vampires/Lust of the Vampire*, 1957), a visually ornate retelling of the legend of Elizabeth Báthory, a sixteenth-century Hungarian countess who serially murdered hundreds of young women. The movie tapped into the Gothic roots of the genre—which Freda's cinematographer, Mario Bava, reaffirmed in the lyrical *La maschera del demonio* (*Mask of the Demon/Black Sunday*, 1960)—and launched the career of the British-born actress Barbara Steele (b. 1937) as Italy's horror diva par excellence; it also contained an undercurrent of sexual pathology that would become a hallmark of the Italian horror film.

After the Gothic anthology *I tre volti della paura* (*Three Faces of Fear/Black Sabbath*, 1963), Bava made the film that would steer Italian horror in a completely new direction—that of sadistic terror. *Sei donne per l'assassino* (*Six Women for the Murderer/Blood and Black Lace*, 1964) uses the flimsiest of murder mystery plots in order to focus our attention on the act of murder itself as sado-voyeuristic spectacle. This was the fundamental impulse of the thriller genre known as the *giallo* that would come to dominate Italian horror in the 1970s. (*Giallo* means "yellow" in Italian and refers to the low-grade yellow paper that detective and horror novels were printed on in the 1930s and the 1940s; the English-language equivalent might be "pulp," indicating a form of fiction that is cheap, lurid, and sensational but also highly efficient.)

Bava himself made many other such films, but his last important work was a ghost story in the Gothic mode—*Operazione paura* (*Operation Fear*, 1966)—whose hallucinatory color palette and sensuously fluid camera movement demonstrated how deeply art can interfuse a low-budget form.

With the international success of a single film in 1969, Dario Argento (b. 1940) made the *giallo* his special province for a decade. *L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo* (*The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*) is a sort of ultraviolent version of *Blow-Up*, in which the attempt to solve a series of slasher murders puts the protagonists in ever-greater jeopardy from the murderer. While it has some interest at the level of character and plot, the film is essentially a stripped-down machine for the delivery of sado-voyeuristic thrills. Argento refined his style from the mid-1970s through the early 1980s until he approached a level of nearly plotless, abstract horror—a visionary cinema of attractions whose stylistic hallmarks are a lurid, saturated color palette; a perpetually moving Steadicam; and increasingly bizarre special effects. Yet his early films were widely imitated, and the *giallo* became, for several years, an extremely popular form.

Whereas most of the Gothic horror films of the 1960s had been shot in stylized black and white, all of the *gialli* were shot in Technicolor and Techniscope, as befits a subgenre whose most salient content was visceral horror. Many also featured edgy scores by Ennio Morricone and/or his frequent collaborator, Bruno Nicolai, as well as makeup effects by Carlo Rambaldi, who would later share Oscars for *King Kong* (1976), *Alien* (1979), and *E.T.* (1982); and some of the best were written by Ernesto Gastaldi (b. 1934), a veteran scenarist of both Gothic horror and peplum films.

There were more than a hundred *gialli* released between 1971 and 1975. The *giallo* peaked in 1975 but reemerged during the American slasher cycle of the early 1980s, which it had decisively influenced—for example, John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978), Sean Cunningham's *Friday the 13th* (1980), and Brian De Palma's *Dressed to Kill* (1980); the latter film is so *giallo*-esque that it could have been shot at Cinecittà. In the wake of the slasher boom, Italian directors demonstrated that the *giallo* was still a viable form, but by the mid-1980s, Italian horror had already entered a new stage.

Starting with Argento's *Suspiria* (1977), a new style of hallucinatory horror had been broached that involved heavy doses of neo-Gothic fantasy and prosthetic gore. During the 1980s, the master of this style was Lucio Fulci (1927–1996), a paragon of the Italian exploitation cinema who had worked in every genre from peplum films to spaghetti Westerns and *gialli*. In 1979, with *Zombi 2* (U.K. title: *Zombie Flesh Eaters*; U.S. title: *Zombie*), described by one critic as "[a] brutal journey into metaphysical chaos and abject physical horror," Fulci ushered in a wave of Italian zombie and cannibal films that concentrated on scenes of mutilation, torture, and dismemberment with savage intensity—brilliantly provided in many cases by the special-effects and makeup artist Gianetto "Gino" De Rossi (b. 1942).

Under the influence of Fulci, Italian zombie films attained a kind of weird, if repulsive, poetry, whereas the 1980s "cannibal films" tended toward graphic,



Jessica Harper in *Suspiria* (Dario Argento, 1977).

stomach-churning realism presented from a speciously clinical "ethnographic" point of view. Disgusting and arguably obscene, the apocalyptic carnality of several cannibal films—for example, Ruggero Deodato's *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980) and Umberto Lenzi's *Cannibal ferox* (English title: *Make Them Die Slowly*, 1981)—lent them a perverse lyricism, attracting many steadfast and serious admirers, as well as armies of outraged critics.

During the next decade, Fulci made a succession of brilliant, gory horror films about the returning dead, many of them with the same team that had produced *Zombie*. The best of these—*Paura nella città dei morti viventi* (*City of the Living Dead/Gates of Hell*, 1980), *Quella villa accanto al cimitero* (*House by the Cemetery*, 1981), and *L'aldilà* (*The Beyond*, 1981)—offer delirious, dreamlike descents into hell; indeed, *The Beyond* is often described as one of the most visually beautiful horror films ever made. Fulci was an exploitation director, working almost always on a small budget, and of his fifty-four features, several were undeniably squalid. Yet his horror films had a remarkable consistency of vision and logic. Perhaps more than any other national cinema, Italy's has bumped up against the edges of the lurid and sensational for much of its mainstream history.

The Italian industry today produces eighty to a hundred films a year and is dominated by two major distributors—Vittorio Cecchi Gori, who is also a leading producer, and Silvio Berlusconi, the right-wing media tycoon who became Italy's prime minister in 1994. Domestic features usually account for 20 to 25 percent of the total annual gross, and it is still possible for small independent projects to flourish. Yet it is clear that in the twenty-first century, Italian film production, historically entrepreneurial and decentralized, will become increasingly corporatized.

Contemporary Widescreen Technologies and Styles

The French and Italian film renaissances of the 1960s paved the way for a new era of cinematic expression in the decades that followed, one in which narrative is no longer an end in itself, but a medium for audiovisual essays in philosophy, psychology, ideology, and social criticism—essays, that is, on the human condition. In short, the cinema has become today at the level of general practice what it has always been for its greatest individual auteurs, regardless of their particular aesthetic: a form of audiovisual literature. Yet contemporary widescreen cinema is as formally distinct from the postwar sound film as the postwar sound film was from the silent film. Aesthetically, the new cinema is one of subjective involvement and mise-en-scène predicated on the widescreen sequence shot.

This is the future cinema of the "integral style" announced by André Bazin before his death in 1958. Its predecessors were early masters of the long take—Feuillade, von Stroheim, and Murnau in the silent cinema; Renoir, Rossellini, and Welles in the sound film. These mise-en-scène auteurs had been forced to do their pioneer work within the black-and-white rectangle of the Academy frame and were recognizably eccentric to the mainstream tradition of narrative and expressive montage. The introduction of the widescreen processes and the improvement of color film stock in the 1950s were the technological preconditions for a full-scale revolution in favor of mise-en-scène aesthetics, and Bazin recognized this in his last essays.

Yet Bazin could not have foreseen two vastly significant technological developments of the 1960s: (1) the perfection and widespread use of handheld



Marisa Berenson and Ryan O'Neal in *Barry Lyndon* (Stanley Kubrick, 1975): a midrange telephoto zoom.

35mm cameras, which permitted continuous and spontaneous on-location shooting, and (2) refinements achieved within the optical industries using computer technology, which included improved wide-angle and telephoto lenses and ultimately produced the modern zoom lens. This latter development was especially significant, because by the mid-1960s all three types of lenses were standard equipment, and lens optics had become an essential component of the integral style.

The wide-angle lens is a lens of short **focal length**, as low as 12.5mm, which covers a greater angle of vision than a conventional lens (the normal focal length for 35mm filmmaking is 35mm to 50mm). It is used by cinematographers to shoot relatively large subjects at short range under the kinds of physical restrictions that obtain, for example, in small rooms and in automobiles. Because the wide-angle lens works like an inverted telescope, it gives its images an exaggerated depth of field. The **telephoto lens**, conversely, is a lens of great focal length, up to 500mm, and is capable of achieving a variety of long-distance, telescopic close-ups. As the optical opposite of the wide-angle lens, the telephoto produces images that have little or no depth of field. The **zoom lens**, finally, is a lens of variable focal length that can move continuously from an extreme wide-angle long shot to an extreme telephoto close-up, traversing all positions in between (optically, for example, from a focal length of 25mm to 250mm—a fairly standard zoom ratio of 10:1).

The zoom lens introduced the important capacity for tracking optically without moving the camera. When such a lens is advanced toward its telephoto setting, the field of the image decreases radically and the camera seems to move toward its subject, and vice versa. Countless shots in Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* (1975), for which a special 20:1 zoom lens (the Cine-Pro T9 24–480mm) was designed, are structured according to this principle.

Similarly, if the camera pans slightly in its telephoto setting, the effect on the screen will be that of a

lateral tracking shot. An outstanding example of this latter technique occurs near the end of Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), when the camera pans a long row of shops in slightly out-of-focus close-up before coming to rest and refocusing on C. W. Moss's father, as he betrays the two outlaws to a Texas Ranger through the window of an ice cream parlor. Visconti's *Morte a Venezia* (*Death in Venice*, 1971) is an excellent example of a film that consistently employs telephoto and zoom shots as substitutes for tracking, as are virtually all of the films of Robert Altman.

Yet perhaps the most stunning use of optical traveling in modern cinema occurs at the end of Ján Kadár's *Adrift* (1971), when the anguished and apparently deranged protagonist, who has been standing under a tree outside his house at evening, attempts to return to the house. At the beginning of the shot, the camera is behind the man with the zoom lens in its telephoto setting, so that there seems to be very little distance between either him and the house or him and the camera. As he starts to walk toward the house, however, the lens begins to zoom slowly backward toward its wide-angle position, putting ever greater distance between both man and house and man and camera. As he sees his house recede before him, the man starts to run wildly toward it, and the lens zooms backward at an ever-increasing pace, paralleling his headlong flight, until finally the runner is left optically adrift, hanging suspended in space as both camera and house recede. This powerful image of madness and horror would have been impossible to achieve without a lens of variable focal length.

Another effect of which the zoom lens is capable is that of hovering or searching, as if the camera were trying to decide which element of a scene to focus on from moment to moment—an especially valuable device for composing mass scenes such as the mess-hall sequences in Robert Altman's *M*A*S*H* (1970), or the outlaws' long walk through the teeming village of Agua Verde that precedes the final massacre in Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969). The zoom lens can also cause the camera to seem to leap backward or forward in space to isolate a significant detail in close-up without a cut. Thus, lenses of variable focal length permit a filmmaker to move back and forth—from long shot to medium shot to close-up—without the loss of continuity imposed by montage. It has even been suggested that Griffith would not have developed the syntax of narrative editing if zoom lenses had been available to him when he made his pioneering masterworks. This seems unlikely, because editing of some sort will always be an essential component of cinematic expression, and Griffith was too innovative a genius not to have recognized the fact—but in principle, at least, the suggestion is a valid one.

Of course, the possibilities for cutting on movement were greatly increased by the cinema's new capacity for optical traveling, and the action sequences in Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* and *Junior Bonner* (1972) provide fine examples of the powerful kinetic impact that cutting on optical movement can achieve. Furthermore, unique visual effects can be obtained by intercutting telephoto and zoom shots with shots made through conventional lenses, which possess greater depth of field. This is because lenses of variable focal length have a distorting characteristic that makes optical movement qualitatively different from real camera movement—that is, they destroy depth of field. As Paul Joannides has written, "Unlike a tracking shot, a zoom represents a denial of perspective. The effect is not one of moving through space, but of space warping toward or away from the camera."

For this reason, lenses of variable focal length can be said, in some sense, to eliminate the third dimension and deny the reality of space by abstracting it. In Antonioni's *Il deserto rosso* (*The Red Desert*; 1964), for example, recurring telephoto close shots of the heroine depict a lone figure against an abstracted and flattened array of shapes, forms, and patterns—in reality, the industrial landscape of Ravenna—that not only connects the character with her environment, but emphasizes its meaninglessness.

This expressive effect could have been achieved only by shooting the scenes through a wide-open telephoto or zoom lens, and it plainly illustrates how variable-focus lenses became an important new aesthetic resource for contemporary filmmakers who practiced the integral style. In fact, the refinement of lens optics, more than any technological development since the introduction of widescreen, made possible the new cinema of subjective involvement and psychological affect—a cinema of mise-en-scène whose surface is often as abstractly Expressionistic as it is realistic.

Writing of this future cinema in 1970, Joannides noted, "The camera will . . . play a more passive role dramatically, but a more potent one visually. Rather than being placed to construct the scene, it will treat the

(right) Monica Vitti in *Il deserto rosso* (*The Red Desert*; Michelangelo Antonioni, 1964): a telephoto close shot.



scene as a formal entity. Thus observation and group composition will be more important than the dialectic of 'significant' detail which usually makes up drama. Dialogue will tend to be replaced by conversation and will be arranged differently, in set-pieces rather than by crosscutting." By the last quarter of the twentieth century, this cinema had arrived. In fact, as French and Italian films of the era demonstrate, the world's most advanced filmmakers had for some time been composing for the lens, rather than for the frame.

Scandinavian or Nordic Cinema

Ingmar Bergman and Others

The work and reputation of the Swedish director Ingmar Bergman (1918–2007) eclipsed that of all other Scandinavian filmmakers for much of the postwar era. The son of a Lutheran pastor to the royal court of Sweden, Bergman was trained in theater and opera. Between 1940 and 1944, he worked on scripts for Svensk Filmindustri, the Swedish national film trust, which was undergoing a wartime revival. He received his first screenplay credit for Alf Sjöberg's *Torment* (*Hets*, 1944).

Between 1945 and 1955, Bergman wrote and directed thirteen somber films that explored the themes of loneliness, alienation, and the sheer difficulty of being alive. During this time, he discovered a long-term collaborator in cinematographer Gunnar Fischer (1910–2011), and built up his first stock company of distinguished performers: Max von Sydow, Gunnar Björnstrand, Ingrid Thulin, Gunnel Lindblom, Harriet Andersson, Bibi Andersson, and Eva Dahlbeck (Liv Ullmann and Erland Josephson joined him later). He also evolved his characteristic working method of first writing his films as novels, then distilling them into screenplays, and finally, audiovisual images.

It was *Smiles of a Summer Night* (*Sommarnattens leende*, 1955) that first brought Bergman to worldwide attention, although few critics recognized beneath the surface of this sophisticated farce a Swedish version of Renoir's *La règle du jeu* (*The Rules of the Game*, 1939). In *The Seventh Seal* (*Det sjunde inseglet*, 1957), a poetic allegory of a medieval knight caught up in a losing chess match with Death, Bergman brilliantly evoked the Middle Ages and posed the first of a series of metaphysical questions about the relationship of man to God, a theme that was to occupy him for a decade.

The Seventh Seal established Bergman as an important artist, but *Wild Strawberries* (*Smultronstället*, 1957), the film that followed, was clearly his greatest work of the 1950s. This beautifully lyrical film is constructed around dreams and memories as they assail the elderly Isak Borg, a distinguished professor of science (superbly played by Bergman's greatest predecessor in Swedish cinema, Victor Sjöström), who is being driven across contemporary Sweden by his daughter-in-law to receive an honorary doctorate at the University of Lund.

Bergman concluded his important work of the 1950s with *The Virgin Spring* (*Jungfrukällen*, 1959), a powerful film based on a thirteenth-century ballad. In it, a beautiful young girl on her way to church is brutally raped and murdered in the woods by three herdsmen, who later seek refuge at her father's fortress. He discovers their guilt and butchers them like pigs in a sequence of nearly apocalyptic violence. When the girl's body is discovered later in the woods, the father vows to build a church on the spot, and in an ironic conclusion, a spring wells up miraculously from the ground, signifying divine forgiveness.

Bergman next made an austere trilogy about the difficulty of existing in a universe wholly unredeemed by the presence of God. *Through a Glass Darkly* (*Sasom i en spegel*, 1961), the first work of what might be called a religious trilogy, is a starkly unappealing film about a schizophrenic woman living on a remote Baltic island with her physician husband, her father, and her teenage brother. In the plotless *Winter Light/The Communicants* (*Nattvardsgästerna*, 1962), the austerity of Bergman's relentless spiritual probing becomes almost unbearable: a widowed village pastor celebrates communion regularly but can do nothing to assuage the real spiritual suffering of his communicants because he lacks literally what the church gives him officially—the ability to mediate between man and God. Similar to Carl Theodor Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928), much of *Winter Light* is constructed of extreme close-ups of the characters' faces, a technique that Bergman came to use more and more as a means of suggesting psychological torment.

With the third film, *The Silence* (*Tystnaden*, 1963), Bergman succeeded in creating another masterpiece. In it, two sisters come to a Central European city, accompanied by the younger woman's small son. The language of the city's inhabitants and even the natural sounds on the brilliantly edited sound track are

(top right) Bengt Ekerot and Max von Sydow in *The Seventh Seal* (*Det sjunde inseglet*; Ingmar Bergman, 1957).

(bottom right) Victor Sjöström in *Wild Strawberries* (*Smultronstället*; Ingmar Bergman, 1957).





incomprehensible, to both the travelers and the audience, and so they are—as most of us are—forced to move through a meaningless world in relative isolation from their peers. *The Silence* was brilliantly photographed by Sven Nykvist (1922–2006), who had been Bergman's cinematographer since *The Virgin Spring*.

Working with Bergman from 1959 through 1982, Nykvist became one of the world's leading color cinematographers. After the mid-1960s, Bergman and Nykvist incorporated some of the more boldly experimental techniques of French and Italian cinema into their work. This change in style signaled Bergman's new thematic concern with the nature of human psychology, perception, and identity, explored in the director's second great trilogy of the 1960s: *Persona* (1966), *Hour of the Wolf* (*Vargtimmen*, 1968), and *Shame* (*Skammen*, 1968).

Framed by sequences that seemingly depict the projection and photographing of the film itself, *Persona* collapses virtually every narrative convention of the cinema to suggest the illusory character of both the medium and the human personalities it seems so realistically to incarnate. The film is essentially about a transference of identity between nurse and patient to the point that their two faces merge, with perfect visual logic, into one. It is also about the different levels on which film, or media in general, can be said to represent the real. Yet its narrative style is so elliptical, disjointed, and self-reflexive that *Persona* ultimately suggests that the cinema is no more illusory than the reality that it pretends to record. *Hour of the Wolf* and *Shame* are about the hopelessness of maintaining humane and artistic values in a state of perpetual war (which, Bergman seems to suggest, is the state of the modern world).

Bergman continued to work in this same vein in his next endeavor, *Cries and Whispers* (*Viskningar och rop*, 1973), a highly stylized film about the nature of death and dying. In *Fanny and Alexander* (*Fanny och Alexander*, 1982), his most lavishly produced and accessible work and the winner of four American Academy Awards, Bergman re-created the magical world of his childhood in the university town of Uppsala in the early years of the twentieth century.

Bergman was an artist of vast and unusual talent, and he was clearly among the most important filmmakers in the history of Western cinema. His vision of the human condition was as gloomy as that of any of his great predecessors in Scandinavian cinema, the Swedes Mauritz Stiller and Victor Sjöström, and the Dane Carl Theodor Dreyer (by whom he was profoundly influenced). His themes hark back, too, to those of the two Scandinavian giants of late-nineteenth-century drama, Ibsen and Strindberg.

Yet his pessimistic vision was not wholly unredeemed. Despite his cosmic nihilism, Bergman was essentially a religious artist whose films concern the fundamental questions of human existence: the meaning of suffering and pain, the inexplicability of death, the solitary nature of being, and the difficulty



Liv Ullmann and Bibi Andersson in *Persona* (Ingmar Bergman, 1966).

of locating meaning in a seemingly random and capricious universe. With the possible exception of *Persona*, Bergman was never a great innovator in narrative form, as Welles, Antonioni, or Godard had been, but he was quick to assimilate the important innovations of others. His experiments are intellectual and metaphysical, rather than formal, for he risked alienating his audiences time and again by asking difficult questions and pursuing inherently disturbing themes.

Bergman was free to follow his dark vision of experience with integrity and independence largely due to the economic structure of Svensk Filmindustri, through which he produced all but four of his forty features. Because this organization guarantees to underwrite the production and distribution costs of any approved project that does not return a domestic profit, it is fair to say that Bergman rarely had to work under the extreme economic pressures that afflict most other filmmakers. Yet Bergman would surely have pursued his vision under any circumstances, no matter how difficult, because, as he declared many times, "to make films is for me a natural necessity, a need similar to hunger and thirst."

Bergman also maintained his independence by producing his films with a remarkable economy of means: he used small casts and crews, and he shot in natural locations whenever possible. Gunnar Fischer and Sven Nykvist, for instance, between them photographed virtually all of his films, and Bergman often wrote his scripts with specific actors from his stock company in mind. In a very important sense, Bergman viewed filmmaking as an essentially collective art form. He often compared it to the process of building a medieval cathedral, in which each artisan dedicated the maximum skill of his craft anonymously to the greater glory of God: "Regardless of whether I believe or not, whether I am Christian or not, I would play my part in the collective building of the cathedral."

Sweden

The Swedish film industry itself is small, state-subsidized, and oriented largely toward the domestic market of 8.6 million people. Bergman was its sole international postwar giant, but other Swedish directors produced notable films during the course of his career. Other key Swedish filmmakers of the same era were Arne Sucksdorff (1917–2001), Bo Widerberg (1930–1997), Vilgot Sjöman (1924–2006), Jan Troell (b. 1931), and Jörn Donner (b. 1933). After Bergman, the most prominent Swedish director outside of his own country is probably Lasse Hallström (b. 1946), who has delivered several successful literary adaptations for American producers—for example, *The Cider House Rules* (1999).

Yet Swedish cinema generally continues to be focused inward. Small-town life, for example, was the subject of the critically acclaimed *Together* (*Tillsammans*; Lukas Moodysson, 2000), a comedy about young people living in collectives during the 1970s, which was widely distributed abroad. In the same year, Sweden produced thirty-five new films, accounting for approximately 25 percent of the domestic box office.

Finland

In addition to Sweden, all of the other Nordic countries have small, state-subsidized film industries. The most prolific in the postwar era has been that of Finland, where support from the Finnish Film Foundation enables a nation of only five million people to produce an annual average of twenty films. Jörn Donner is credited with bringing the influence of Godard to Finnish cinema during the late 1960s, inspiring a brief New Wave in the literature-based Finnish cinema.

In the meantime, two major figures announced themselves in the brothers Mika and Aki Kaurismäki (b. 1955 and 1957, respectively). The Kaurismäkis both direct their own films, collaborating in scriptwriting, fund raising, and production. Both have as their theme the corruption of Finland by Swedish and American influences, but Aki is definitely the more fatalistic and subtle of the two. His directorial debut was an ultramodern version of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (*Rikos ja rangaistus*, 1983), and his Helsinki trilogy—*Shadows in Paradise* (*Varjoja paratiisissa*, 1986), *Ariel* (1989), and *Match Factory Girl* (*Tulitikkutehtaan tyttö*, 1990)—presents the city as a cold, unwelcoming place



Jessica Liedberg and Lisa Lindgren in *Together* (*Tillsammans*; Lukas Moodysson, 2000).

inhabited mainly by criminals and other sociopaths, whereas *Hamlet Goes Business* (1987), *Leningrad Cowboys Go America* (1989), and *I Hired a Contract Killer* (1990) are characterized equally by chaotic humor and parody.

Until 1998, Finnish cinema was dominated by Finnkino, a statewide distribution/exhibition company owned by the Union Bank of Finland; in that year, domestic films took a nosedive at the box office, and the Finnkino monopoly was challenged by the Swedish-Norwegian theater corporation Sandrews and the Danish distribution firm Scanbox, an agent for both Polygram and Miramax. At the same time, the Finnish Film Foundation joined with the four national television channels in a joint production venture that yielded a number of popular hits, which enabled domestic features to achieve a 25 percent market share in 1999, even edging out American blockbusters such as *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace*.

Denmark and Dogme95

With a history extending back to the pre–World War I dominion of Ole Olsen's Nordisk Films Kompagni A/S, and an art heritage including both Benjamin Christensen and Carl Theodor Dreyer, Danish cinema produces ten to fifteen features a year for a population of 5.36 million. The National Film School of Denmark was founded in 1968, and during the 1970s, the market share for domestic features was 25 to 30 percent—not bad, given the dominance of American distributors throughout Scandinavia. Since 1981, the industry has had the financial support of the Danish Film Institute (DFI), established in 1972 as a department of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

By the early 1990s, aggressive competition from American films had driven the Danish market share below 20 percent, and in 1995, domestic features accounted for only 8 percent of box-office receipts, with 81 percent going to the Americans. By 1999, however, the Danish share had returned to its 1970s level (28 percent), thanks to the phenomenal success of several genre films, such as Ole Bornedal's *Nightwatch* (*Nattevagten*, 1994; U.S. remake, 1996) and Susanne Bier's *The One and Only* (*Den eneste ene*, 1999), and to the movement known as Dogme95 ("Dogma 95").

In 1995, several young Danish directors banded together to form a production collective in response to what they considered the current decadence and artificiality of world cinema. Recognizing that they were in the midst of a technological revolution, driven by the proliferation of digital video, that would lead to "the ultimate democratization of the cinema," Lars von Trier (b. 1956), Thomas Vinterberg (b. 1969), Søren Kragh-Jacobsen (b. 1947), and Kristian Levring (b. 1957) produced the Dogme95 Manifesto, together with a set of rules called "The Vow of Chastity," which were designed to liberate the cinema from its bondage to illusionist dramaturgy and bourgeois romanticism (and, thus, auteurism). This "indisputable set of rules" was rendered as the following ten commandments:

1. Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in. (If a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where the prop is found.)
2. The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa. (Music must not be used unless it occurs where the scene is being shot.)
3. The camera must be handheld. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted. (The film must not take place where the camera is standing; shooting must take place where the film takes place.)
4. The film must be in color. Special lighting is not acceptable. (If there is too little light for exposure, the scene must be cut or a single lamp attached to the front of the camera.)
5. Optical work and filters are forbidden.
6. The film must not contain superficial action. (Murders, the use of weapons, etc., must not occur.)
7. Temporal and geographic alienation are forbidden. (That is to say, the film takes place here and now.)
8. Genre movies are not acceptable.
9. The film format must be in Academy 35mm (most often, digital video transferred to film and blown up for 35mm theatrical distribution).
10. The director must not be credited.

Furthermore, the individual filmmaker had to "swear as a director to refrain from personal taste" and to make the following declaration: "I am no longer an artist. . . . My supreme goal is to force the truth out of my characters and settings. I swear to do so by all the means available and at the cost of any good taste and any aesthetic considerations."

(right) Emily Watson in *Breaking the Waves* (Lars von Trier, 1966), a film that complies with nearly all of the Dogme95 rules, at least superficially.





David Bradley in *The King Is Alive* (Kristian Levring, 2000).

Aimed specifically at the feature-length fiction film format (which does not mean that documentaries and short films cannot be aligned with Dogme95 precepts), these rules would have been nearly impossible to follow before the era of lightweight 35mm and digital video cameras, and even now they require considerable discipline to achieve. Their expressed intention was to return the cinema to its realist roots through a minimalist model of production, but their formal difficulty also served to impose a discipline on the production process that encouraged innovation within the confines of the rules.

Initially perceived as a marketing gimmick to boost the domestic industry, the Dogme95 movement quickly demonstrated its serious artistic purpose with three films that won international critical acclaim and did well at the box office—Vinterberg's *The Celebration* (*Festen*, 1998), von Trier's *The Idiots* (*Idioterne*, 1998), and Kragh-Jacobsen's *Mifune* (*Mifunes sidste sang*, 1999). *The Celebration*, which adhered very closely to the Vow of Chastity, won the Jury Prize at Cannes with its harrowing account of a family gathering that turns dark and ugly with the revelation of a respected father's sexual abuse of his children. *The Idiots*, in which a group of "normal" young people imitate the behavior of the mentally retarded to subvert the conventions of Copenhagen's bourgeoisie, is the only von Trier film made in total compliance with the Dogme95 Manifesto, although virtually all of his work—for example, *The Kingdom* (1994), *Breaking the Waves* (1996), and *Dancer in the Dark* (2000)—has been inflected by Dogme principles. *The Idiots* has brought both prestige and controversy to the Danish film industry by radically deconstructing Hollywood genre codes. Kragh-Jacobsen's *Mifune* was another assault on bourgeois hypocrisy shot in stark Dogme style about the son of a poor farming family who aspires to Yuppiedom and lies his way through the film like the bogus samurai character played by Toshiro Mifune in Kurosawa's *The Seven Samurai* (1954).

With Kristian Levring's *The King Is Alive* (2000), in which a group of bus passengers who get stranded in the Namibian desert decide to put on a production of *King Lear* to cope with their isolation, all of the original manifesto signatories had made Dogme films, and the movement had begun to evince an international impact.

Dogme certificates, affirming that productions have adhered to all ten rules as stated in the Vow of Chastity, have been issued to films made in France, Korea, Argentina, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Belgium, Spain, and the United States. Furthermore, the spontaneity and directness of the Dogme style has influenced established directors as diverse in their concerns as Wim Wenders (*Buena Vista Social Club*, 1999) and Agnès Varda (*The Gleaners and I*, 2000), both of whom now shoot on digital video (DV) for transfer to film. Mainstream filmmakers who have recently used Dogme-style DV for features include Mike Figgis (*Timecode*, 2000), Joel Schumacher (*Tigerland*, 2000), Jennifer Jason Leigh and Alan Cumming (*The Anniversary Party*, 2001), and Richard Linklater (*Waking Life*, 2001).

Closer to home, Dogme directors produced a number of solid commercial hits (e.g., Lone Scherfig's *Italian for Beginners/Italiensk for begyndere*, 2001) that have reinvigorated the Danish film industry. Credit for the turnaround must also go to the Danish government, which in 1997 combined the industry's four main components—the DFI (features), the National Film Board of Denmark (shorts and documentaries), the Danish Film Workshop (experimental films and videos), and the Danish Film Museum (the national film archive)—into a single institution, now operating under a single roof at the newly built Film House in Copenhagen. At the same time, the government more than tripled its level of production funding, facilitating the making of eighteen domestic features in 1998 and a record 48 percent of market share for Danish films in 2000.

(right) Stellan Skarsgård in *Insomnia* (Erik Skjoldbjærg, 1997).

Norway and Iceland

Of the other Scandinavian countries, Norway and Iceland both have small film industries. Similar to Denmark, Norway (population 4.5 million) has a film history extending back to the silent period, but its unique system of municipally owned theaters impeded growth until after World War II, when the government began a system of partial production subsidies, based on a "tickets tax." This funding enabled a small domestic industry to thrive, considerably enhanced by the North Sea oil boom of the late 1970s and the 1980s.

Norway gained international recognition in 1986, when director Oddvar Einarson (b. 1949) won the Silver Lion at Venice for his first feature, *X* (1986), and Ola Solum's (1943–1996) *Orion's Belt* (*Orions belte*) became the nation's first worldwide release. Later, Norway scored a worldwide hit with London-trained Erik Skjoldbjærg's (b. 1964) *Insomnia* (1997), a psychological thriller about a murder investigation in a small coastal town beyond the Arctic Circle.

During the 1980s and the 1990s, there were three sources of government production subsidy in Norway: the Foundation for Audiovisual Productions for documentaries, the national Film Institute, and the state-owned production company Norsk Film for features; at the same time, a film school was established at Lillehammer and a film museum in Oslo. Norsk Film was privatized in 2000, the same year that the industry scored a series of domestic hits. Finally, although Norway's 159 municipally owned cinemas are responsible for 90 percent of all ticket sales, privately owned theaters have begun to appear in and around Oslo, which is the country's only major city.

Icelandic cinema remains a cottage industry, yet that a country of only 329,100 inhabitants supports a film industry at all is nothing short of astounding. Iceland did not begin postwar production until 1977, but its breakthrough came in 1980 when films by Ágúst Guðmundsson (b. 1947), *Land and Sons* (*Land og synir*), and Hrafn Gunnlaugsson (b. 1948), *Ancestral Estate* (*Óðal feðranna*), both concerned with the tensions between rural and urban society, were noted at several international festivals. Similar attention was accorded to Gunnlaugsson's saga-inspired Viking epic, *When the Raven Flies* (*Hrafninn flýgur*, 1984), which also became a domestic smash hit.

Another significant Icelandic director is Friðrik Þór Friðriksson (b. 1954), and his *Devil's Island* (1996), a Tarantino-like crime film, beat out the American blockbuster *Independence Day* to become the top-grossing film of 1996. Friðriksson's biography of a schizophrenic Icelandic poet, *Angels of the Universe* (*Englar alheimsins*, 2000), was widely regarded as the greatest film





Ingvar Eggert Sigurðsson in *Angels of the Universe* (*Englar alheimsins*; Friðrik Þór Friðriksson, 2000).

to emerge from Iceland to date. The tiny nation produces an average of six features a year, many on digital video and all receiving some support from the government-sponsored Icelandic Film Fund. Until 1998, however, this funding was meager, which encouraged Icelandic producers to seek outside investment and co-production.

Spain

Luis Buñuel

For decades, Spanish cinema was associated almost exclusively with the work of Luis Buñuel (1900–1983), who was, paradoxically, the quintessential artist in exile for most of his career. After making the bitter and sardonic documentary *Las hurdes* (1932)—which was banned by the Spanish Republican government of 1933–1935 as "defamatory" but was later released by the Popular Front government during the civil war—Buñuel did not direct another film for fifteen years. He worked sporadically as a producer in Paris, Hollywood, and Madrid before emigrating to America in 1938 to escape Fascism. There, he edited war documentaries for the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York and supervised the Spanish-language versions of films for Warner Bros. and MGM.

In 1947, he was given a chance to direct two popular comedies for the Mexican producer Óscar Dancigers, and on the strength of their commercial success, he was permitted to make *Los olvidados* (*The Forgotten Ones/The Young and the Damned*, 1950), the film that restored his reputation as an important international artist.

Ostensibly a neorealist portrayal of juvenile delinquency in modern Mexico City, *Los olvidados* is actually a disturbing catalogue of man's darkest and most destructive impulses, as subversive in its way as Buñuel's earlier surrealist films. The corrupted slum youth of the city are condemned to live in a nightmarish world of violence, brutality, and degradation, not only because of the poverty imposed on them by bourgeois



Roberto Cobo in *Los olvidados* (*The Forgotten Ones/The Young and the Damned*; Luis Buñuel, 1950).

capitalism (whose image is ever-present in the rising skyscrapers that dominate the film's background) but also because of the wretchedness of reality itself. Austerely photographed by the Mexican cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa (1907–1997), who was to work on all of Buñuel's Mexican masterpieces, *Los olvidados* achieves an almost hallucinatory quality through the relentless exposition of an external reality (not to mention a brilliant and terrifying Freudian dream sequence) that is literally hell on earth. The extraordinary quality of this film was recognized when it won Buñuel the Cannes Director's Prize in 1951. He continued to work within Mexican commercial cinema for the next five years, producing a series of unique and expertly crafted films on low budgets and short production schedules.

After 1955, Buñuel went to Paris, where he directed three international co-productions that are openly political in theme. Buñuel returned to Mexico in 1958 to direct *Nazarín*, the masterpiece that marked the beginning of his greatest period. Based on a nineteenth-century Mexican novel set during the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, this film concerns the spiritual pilgrimage of a saintlike priest who makes the error of sincerely attempting to follow Christian doctrine and imitate the life of Christ. He is finally hunted down by police for his part in fomenting a workers' rebellion and is tossed into jail. The point of this intentionally ambiguous film is that *Nazarín*, who undertakes his quest with sincerity, humility, and great moral courage, manages to achieve absolutely nothing in the course of it but his own destruction.

This attitude was given its most brilliant exposition in *Viridiana* (1961), an anti-Catholic, antifascist parable that Buñuel shot in Catholic Spain under the



El ángel exterminador (*The Exterminating Angel*; Luis Buñuel, 1962).

very noses of Fascist censors, who approved the script. *Viridiana*, like *Nazarín*, concerns a devout and saintly person whose attempts to lead a truly Christian life end in disaster for herself and everyone around her. No sooner was the film released than Spanish authorities realized its subversive nature and attempted to destroy all copies. Yet it was too late: prints had already reached Cannes, where the film was accepted as the official Spanish entry in the festival and awarded the Palme d'Or—the first ever won by a Spanish film—to the everlasting chagrin of the Franco regime. Moreover, there was so little ambiguity about the film's anticlericalism that it was publicly de-nounced by the Vatican as "an insult to Christianity."

If *Viridiana* truly is Buñuel's ultimate insult to Christianity, then its successor, *El ángel exterminador* (*The Exterminating Angel*; Mexico, 1962), is clearly his ultimate insult to conventional bourgeois morality. In this film, which many critics regard as Buñuel's greatest, a group of wealthy people gather at an elegant villa for a sumptuous dinner party. After the meal, they retire to a drawing room, but when it is time to go home, they find themselves mysteriously unable to leave the room—and, just as strangely, no one from outside can get in. Filthy, foul-smelling, and driven to the brink of madness by their extreme situation, the prisoners finally attempt to reconstruct the circumstances leading up to their imprisonment. Miraculously, the

tactic works, and they stumble out of the villa toward an anxiously waiting public like the emaciated survivors of a death camp.

With *Le journal d'une femme de chambre* (*Diary of a Chambermaid*, 1964; also filmed by Renoir, 1946), Buñuel returned to France to make his most political film—and his first in widescreen. He transposed the setting of Octave Mirbeau's decadent novel of erotic obsession among the French upper classes from the turn of the century to 1928, a time when French Fascism was gathering the force that would ultimately permit the collapse of the Third Republic and the Nazi Occupation. A Parisian chambermaid (Jeanne Moreau) quits her post to take a job in the manor house of a large provincial estate that proves to be a hotbed of reactionary politics and sexual pathology. The estate's gamekeeper, Joseph, is a psychopathic sadist who likes to torture small animals and who rapes and murders a little girl with whom the maid has become friends. The maid suspects Joseph and finally denounces him to the police, for which she is fired. Joseph is not prosecuted, and the film ends years later in Marseilles, with the former gamekeeper, now a prosperous café owner, shouting slogans in support of a large Fascist rally. Buñuel cuts to a bolt of lightning rending the sky, an unequivocal reminder that brutality will continue to triumph over decency and innocence in the coming storm of war. Buñuel's equation of fascism, decadence, and sexual perversion in *Le journal* is perfectly made, and it brings the film close in spirit to Bertolucci's *Il conformista* (1970).

In 1967, at the age of sixty-seven, Buñuel returned to France to make *Belle de jour*, the film that he claimed would be his last (although he was to direct five more unequivocal masterpieces). Exquisitely photographed in color by Sacha Vierny, *Belle de jour* is another Buñuelian classic of erotic obsession: Séverine, the beautiful wife of a successful surgeon who is also a kind husband, has a secret compulsion for sexual degradation. She attempts to realize her masochistic fantasies by working afternoons in Madame Anaïs's brothel, where she is christened "Belle de jour" (a play on *belle de nuit*, a French euphemism for prostitute). For Buñuel, the old surrealist, the brothel is a place of absolute freedom, precisely because it is a region where fantasy interpenetrates reality. *Belle de jour* is a hypnotically engaging film, as beautiful in its artistic intelligence as in its visually exquisite surface, and it was justly awarded the Golden Lion at Venice in 1967.

As if to contradict himself with all due haste, Buñuel turned to his next project immediately after the release of *Belle de jour*. The film *La voie lactée* (*The Milky Way*; France, 1969) is a symbolic history of the Roman Catholic Church, with all of its heresies and schisms, told in the form of an episodic narrative about two tramps journeying from Paris to the shrine of the Apostle James at Santiago de Compostela ("St. James of the Field of Stars") in Spain. *Tristana* (1970), however, was a French/Italian co-production set in the ancient Spanish city of Toledo in the 1920s, and concerns a decadent aristocrat, Don Lope, who systematically corrupts and enslaves his innocent young ward, Tristana (from *triste*, meaning sad).

Buñuel's next film, *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (*The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*; France, 1972), is a legitimate successor to both *L'âge d'or* (1930) and *El ángel exterminador* (1962), but exchanges their savage bite for gently mocking irony. It is a buoyant satire about the foibles and follies of the privileged class, structured as an extended dream in the mind of Don Rafael, the ambassador to France from the fictive Latin American country of Miranda, a military dictatorship that has the highest homicide rate in the world. Don Rafael's dream, which includes the dreams of others and dreams within dreams, concerns the constantly frustrated efforts of six friends to dine together in a civilized manner. The film, in fact, is one long pattern of interrupted episodes, and in this sense Buñuel has created a delightful parody of the mechanisms of narrative cinema.

Le fantôme de la liberté (*The Phantom of Liberty*; France, 1974) continues the experiments begun in *Le charme discret* and may well be Buñuel's most stylistically revolutionary work since *Un chien andalou* and *L'âge d'or*. In it, the director combines virtually every known storytelling device—narrative painting, the Gothic mode, the epistolary mode, omniscient narration, the flashback, the exemplary tale, the dream sequence, and dense patterns of allusion to other films—to create an episodic narrative that is simultaneously circular and self-reflexive. By interweaving episodes from the past and present that constantly disappoint our narrative expectations, Buñuel has produced an authentically surrealist essay on the political violence, necrophilia, and sadism that underlie bourgeois cultural conventions and make an elusive phantom of personal freedom.

Buñuel's last film, *Cet obscur objet du désir* (*That Obscure Object of Desire*, 1977), is an urbane and coolly ironic film about a young Spanish girl who teases and ultimately fleeces a middle-aged French widower. Buñuel compounds the irony by having two actresses with distinctly different physical appearances play the single "object" of the title, as if to suggest the polymorphous nature of desire itself.



Le fantôme de la liberté (*The Phantom of Liberty*; Luis Buñuel, 1974).

From *Un chien andalou* to *Cet obscur objet du désir*, Buñuel proved himself to be the most experimental and anarchistic filmmaker in the history of narrative cinema. He was fundamentally a brilliant satirist, comparable to Jonathan Swift and Francisco Goya, who used sexual pathology as a metaphor for the distorting nature of bourgeois Christian culture. Necrophilia, sadomasochism, fetishism, cannibalism, and bestiality were for Buñuel at once both cause and effect of the mass psychosis that we call Western civilization. Like all great satirists, Buñuel was simultaneously a moralist, a humorist, and a savage social critic who hoped that by exposing the nauseating inhumanity of human beings, he would somehow make us more human.

Until very near the end of his career, Buñuel employed a restrained and uncomplicated visual style, which led some critics to charge him with cinematic "indifference." We should remember, however, that for most of his career Buñuel was forced to either make films for other people on their terms or not make films at all. This often meant shooting on low budgets with production schedules as short as three or four weeks. It also meant that Buñuel could not make his first film in color until 1952 or his first film in widescreen until 1964, and it would be fair to argue that although an artist in Bergman's position can afford style, one in Buñuel's cannot.

Yet actually, of course, Buñuel's indifference to style is a style in itself. This is as it should be for an artist who deals so consistently in the blasphemous, the sardonic, and the perverse. The invisibility of Buñuel's style is the deliberate artistic strategy of a master ironist: what we see is so clearly what we get in Buñuel that we trust him not to dupe us, which enables him to dupe us every time. He always dupes us for our own good, though, by forcing us to acknowledge what we really are, instead of what we would like to be, and the jokes he makes at our expense are most often hilariously funny. Buñuel's ironic vision of human experience is perhaps best summed up in a statement he once made when asked if he had ever been a religious person. "I have always been an atheist," he responded, "thank God."

New Spanish Cinema

With the exception of the work of Buñuel, most of which was done outside of Spain, in any case, Spanish cinema was little known beyond its national borders

until after Francisco Franco's death in 1975. Under Franco, Spanish cinema had remained state-supported and paternalistic—for example, the official film version of the Civil War, *Raza* (*Race*, 1941), was written under a pseudonym by Franco himself and directed by a relative of Falangist founder Primo de Rivera; production was controlled by a private monopoly (CIFESA); and there was a government-operated newsreel service (Noticiario Cinematográfico Español, or "No-Do").

Yet a film school, Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematográficas (IIEC), was founded at Madrid in 1947, and some changes began to stir there during the 1950s, beginning with an Italian film week held in May 1951. According to film scholar Marsha Kinder, this event featured a program of recent neorealist films, most of which were banned from public exhibition, that strongly influenced the work of IIEC graduates Juan Antonio Bardem (1922–2002) and Luis García Berlanga (1921–2010), shaping the future course of Spanish cinema.

Their collaboration the following year produced *Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall* (*Welcome, Mr. Marshall*, 1952), an immensely popular satire about the enrichment of a small Spanish village as a result of the Marshall Plan, which won special mention at Cannes. Working separately for the rest of the decade, the two continued to make mildly sardonic social satires. Aside from their films, Bardem and Berlanga influenced the direction of Spanish cinema in their sponsorship of the Salamanca "Conversations," a national symposium on film held in the spring of 1955 that called for a more realistic approach to contemporary social ills, and their participation in UNINCI, an independent production company established in 1951 in the wake CIFESA's financial collapse.

It was UNINCI that invited Buñuel back to Spain to make *Viridiana* (1961), and the company's shooting permit was canceled by the government when this subversive film won the Cannes Grand Prix. Yet in general, the period 1962–1972 was one of *apertura* (or "opening") in Spanish culture, because the country itself was moving toward greater integration with Europe. In 1962, Franco's new minister of information, Manuel Fraga Iribarne, appointed an ardent *cinéphile* as director general of cinema. This was José María García Excudero, who reorganized the IIEC as the Escuela Oficial de Cinematografía (EOC), or National Film School, and liberalized the policy of state production subsidies to create the grounds for what he called the "New Spanish Cinema."

This liberalization led to the production of such award-winning work as the first major films of Carlos Saura (b. 1932), who established himself during the 1960s as Spain's leading resident director with a series of black comedies clearly influenced by Buñuel. A political crackdown ended this period, as Franco appointed a new cabinet in 1969 and replaced Fraga with the right-wing Alfredo Sánchez Bella, who was minister of information through 1973. As a result of this shift, the National Film School was shut down in 1970 and not reopened until 1995.

A third and definitive phase of New Spanish Cinema can be distinguished in the period from 1973 to the present. When Franco's handpicked successor, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, was assassinated by Basque separatists in 1973, the nation's movement toward non-Falangist normalization was virtually assured. Franco's last years were the time of the *dictablanda* (or "soft dictatorship"), when a number of groundbreaking, politically allusive films appeared. The most courageous of all, Víctor Erice's *El espíritu de la colmena* (*The Spirit of the Beehive*, 1973) presented a densely symbolic account of life on the loser's side in post–Civil War Spain and won several international awards.

Franco, who had been seriously ill for years, died at the age of eighty-two on November 20, 1975. By the end of 1977, censorship had been abolished and the first free elections held in more than forty years; a democratic constitution was approved in 1978. As Spain emerged from its Fascist darkness during the next decade, its economy became increasingly integrated with that of Europe and the world, opening new channels of film distribution for the generation of directors emerging from the EOC, as well as for new work by Berlanga, Bardem, Saura, and others.

Major attention was focused on the second generation of New Spanish filmmakers by Pilar Miró (1940–1997), originally a television director (Spanish television, RTVE, was founded in 1956) whose theatrical feature *El crimen de Cuenca* (*The Cuenca Crime*, 1979) became a cause célèbre for critics of the limitations on freedom of expression in Spain. Based on a 1912 incident in which two members of the Civil Guard had brutally tortured an innocent peasant to extract a murder confession, the film was briefly suppressed by military authorities, and Miró herself was tried unsuccessfully for defamation. When it was finally released in 1981, *El crimen de Cuenca* quickly became the highest-grossing film in Spanish box-office history, and Miró was appointed director general of cinematography by the newly elected Socialist premier Felipe González in December 1981. In this post, as Peter Besas points out, Miró adopted a policy of



Ana Torrent in *El espíritu de la colmena* (*The Spirit of the Beehive*; Víctor Erice, 1973).

virtually unlimited subsidization of "quality" producers and "prestige" directors and created the context for a true Spanish art cinema among filmmakers of her own generation. These include, most prominently, Miró herself, Jaime Chávarri (b. 1943), Jaime Camino (b. 1936), José Luis Garci (b. 1944), Antonio Drove (b. 1942), Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón (b. 1942), José Juan Bigas Luna (b. 1946), Eloy de la Iglesia (b. 1944), Pedro Olea (b. 1938), Fernando Trueba (b. 1955), Agustín Villaronga (b. 1953), and the enormously successful Pedro Almodóvar (b. 1951). Almodóvar's perverse, anarchic, and wildly funny films have consistently led the list of top Spanish exports to the West since 1986, and they are paradigmatic, if not entirely typical, of the current vitality of Spanish cinema.

With a population of 39 million, post-Franco Spain was able to produce an average of fifty films a year during the 1980s and eighty films a year during the 1990s—an astonishingly high volume for its population—made possible by a well-funded industrial infrastructure. Among the sources for production finance were national and regional television networks such as Sogotel, Telefónica, RTVE, and Antena 3 TV; and such companies as Lolafilms, Aurum, Cartel, and Mate Productions. In fact, at the turn of the century, 80 percent of Spanish film production relied on some form of co-financing from public and private television stations, in exchange for broadcast rights.

Even though Spanish films command only 10 to 12 percent of the domestic box office, they have

achieved a high level of quality and diversity among several generations of directors, confirming the continuing vitality of the Spanish cinema. Most of these films experienced commercial success at home, and Alejandro Amenábar's stylishly Jamesian ghost story *The Others* (*Los oros*, 2001) became an international hit, grossing nearly $100 million in the American market alone. It is notable, too, that production continues apace from the classically oriented Carlos Saura, as well as from the darkly ironic newcomer Álex de la Iglesia (b. 1965), and that the Spanish market has room for both. Furthermore, such veterans as Luis García Berlanga and Vicente Aranda continued to work in the industry, which also attracted such foreign-born Hispanic directors as Peru's Francisco J. Lombardi (b. 1949) and Mexico's Guillermo del Toro (b. 1964). Both as popular entertainment and as art, Spanish cinema remains distinctive for its dark and somewhat surrealistic cast, as is appropriate to the nation's twentieth-century history.

Germany: *Das neue Kino*

Postwar Origins

Related to other modernist European film movements through its emphatic rejection of conventional narrative syntax and its Marxist ideological perspective, ***das neue Kino*** ("the new cinema") made West German cinema among the most exciting in the world during the 1970s and the 1980s, compensating for its long postwar eclipse. After World War II, Germany was split into Western and Eastern parts, which ultimately became the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, population 63 million) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR, population 17.5 million), until reunification in 1990. Most of the film-production equipment was under Soviet control in the Eastern zone, as were the former UFA studios at Neubabelsberg.

In May 1946, all activities of these production facilities were nationalized under the Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft (DEFA), or German Film Company, which provided new production capital in the form of state subsidies. In the Western sector, the Americans installed the former UFA producer Erich Pommer as film commissioner for that zone and ensured, through various decartelization laws, that no centralized German film industry could emerge to compete with their own.

Nevertheless, the Allies began to license individual production companies in 1946, and the years from 1946 through 1948 saw the release of several notable films dealing with immediate postwar social problems in both the Eastern and the Western zones. These were known as *Trümmerfilme* ("rubble films"), because of the devastated physical condition of the Germany they portrayed, and they gave some hope of a realist German film movement, similar to the one being born concurrently in Italy. Yet as production rose to more than seventy German films a year in 1949, currency reform brought the promise of prosperity to West Germany, and the films of that sector turned away from self-scrutiny and moved toward lightweight entertainment.

Economic recovery proceeded rapidly during the 1950s, and West Germany became the fifth-largest producer of films in the world by the end of the decade. Yet its increasingly escapist *Heimatfilme* ("homeland films") were directed exclusively at the domestic audience, and they compared unfavorably with the glossy Hollywood products that flowed ceaselessly into the market through American-owned distributors. (Although the Americans had prevented the reemergence of a centralized German film industry during the Occupation, they had supported the rebuilding of the exhibition and distribution sectors. After a series of monetary crises during the 1950s, all but one of the major West German distributors, Constantin Film, had fallen into American hands.) In East Germany, the DEFA output remained relatively small and ideologically focused, attacking Nazism as the archenemy of the new socialist state.

When television and increased mobility began to change patterns of leisure activity in the late 1950s, West German film attendance fell off dramatically, just as it did in the rest of Europe and in the United States. Between 1956 and 1968, in fact, it dropped from 900 million to 192 million annually. Domestic production was badly hurt, and the West German film industry had no alternative but to appeal to the federal government for subsidies. These were granted at first in the form of guaranteed credits (*Ausfallbürgschaften*) but were eliminated in 1961 when the Ministry of the Interior decided to help rejuvenate German cinema by awarding production grants for feature films.

Young German Cinema

The seeds of *das neue Kino* were sown at the Oberhausen Film Festival in 1962, when twenty-six writers and filmmakers who had accepted ministry grants called for the establishment of a *junger*



Alexander Kluge (c. 1968), the chief spokesperson for the Oberhausen group.

deutscher film ("young German cinema") in a manifesto that concluded as follows:

> The collapse of the commercial German film industry finally removes the economic basis for a mode of filmmaking whose attitude and practice we reject. With it, the new film has a chance to come to life. The success of German shorts at international festivals demonstrates that the future of the German cinema lies with those who have shown that they speak the international language of the cinema. This new cinema needs new forms of freedom: from the conventions and habits of the established industry, from intervention by commercial partners, and finally freedom from the tutelage of other vested interests. We have specific plans for the artistic, formal and economic realization of this new German cinema. We are collectively prepared to take the economic risks. The old cinema is dead. We believe in the new.

Through its spokesmen, the directors Alexander Kluge and Norbert Kückelmann, the Oberhausen group successfully lobbied the West German parliament (Bundestag) for the formation in 1965 of the Young German Film Board (Kuratorium Junger Deutscher Film), an institution charged with implementing the proposals of the Oberhausen Manifesto. Specifically, drawing from the cultural budgets of the various federal states, the Kuratorium sponsored the first features of Kluge, Hans-Jürgen Pohland, and Werner Herzog, and seventeen other features, between 1965 and 1968. The Oberhausen group was also able to achieve the foundation of two professional film schools (at Munich and Berlin) and a German film archive in Berlin.

Yet by 1970, the successes of the "young German cinema" rang rather hollow. The passage of a film subsidies bill by the Bundestag in 1967 had established a Film Subsidies Board, Filmförderungsanstalt (FFA), that concentrated economic power in the hands of the commercial studios and distributors, and the result was a boom in the production of quick, shoddily made features that were foisted on a dwindling audience through block booking. Most of these productions were idiotic classroom comedies and soft-core pornographic films aimed at West Germany's 2 million immigrant workers. Theater owners were forced to book them as part of package deals with distributors, whether a local audience existed for the films or not.

With West German production hitting an all-time high of 121 films per year in 1969 and film attendance slipping at the rate of 1 million per year, the late 1960s and the early 1970s witnessed a wave of theater closings all over the country. The drivel produced by the first three years of FFA subsidies had alienated serious filmgoers, bored the general public, and brought the West German film industry to the brink of another financial crisis. As recently as 1971, the *New York Times* wrote, "The persistently dismal situation of German film art is unique; a list of new films comprises a greater proportion of trash than anywhere else."

The New German Cinema

Nevertheless, a new German cinema was about to be born from the combined efforts of the Oberhausen group and a group of somewhat younger independent filmmakers who began their careers in West German television. In 1971, this group formed the Filmverlag der Autoren (literally, the "Authors' Film Publishing Group") as a private company to distribute on a cooperative basis the films of its members, who quickly came to include Alexander Kluge, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Bernhard Sinkel, Peter Lilienthal, Ulli Lommel, Edgar Reitz, Hans W. Geissendörfer, Hark Bohm, Reinhard Hauff, Uwe Brandner, and Wim Wenders. The impetus of the Oberhausen group, the resources of West German television and the Kuratorium, and a liberalized FFA grant policy made possible the phenomenal rise of the New German Cinema. Although the films of the movement had only a small following in West Germany itself, they created more excitement within international cinema than anything since the French New Wave.



David Bennent in *The Tin Drum* (*Die Blechtrommel*; Volker Schlöndorff, 1979).

Germany had only just recently begun to come to terms with the nightmare of its own immediate history, its *unbewältige Vergangenheit* ("unassimilated past"). The generation of young filmmakers represented by *das neue Kino* grew up in an Americanized, economically prospering Germany, and were only dimly aware of the Nazi past.

Cultural historians point out that since the collapse of the "Thousand-Year Reich," the German people suffered from a kind of collective amnesia about the "brown years" of Nazi rule, 1933–1945. The shock and humiliation of defeat, the appalling devastation of the material environment, the partitioning of the country, and the collective guilt for the most terrible acts of barbarism and genocide ever committed—all conspired to rob Germany of its cultural identity by robbing it of access to its immediate past. The past was not discussed in postwar German households or dwelled on in postwar German schools.

Since the early 1970s, however, when the postwar generation began demographically to displace the generation that had actually experienced Nazism, public curiosity and confusion about the past steadily increased. Added to this is the fact that through its lucrative postwar alliance with the United States, West Germany traded off large chunks of its cultural identity to become one of the most highly technocratized countries in the world, surpassing perhaps even Japan and the United States itself in some sectors of the gross national product.

This set of circumstances produced in the postwar generation an acute sense of alienation and anomie. Robbed of their past by the infamy of Nazism and of their future by American cultural imperialism, the filmmakers of *das neue Kino* expressed the sense of psychological and cultural dislocation described by the film critic Michael Covino as "a worldwide homesickness." Their films are unsettling and sometimes depressing,



Jutta Lampe and Barbara Sukowa in *Die bleierne Zeit* (*The German Sisters/Marianne and Juliane*; Margarethe von Trotta, 1981).

but there can be no question of their unique contribution to international cinema.

Historically, the New German Cinema movement can be said to date from the release of Volker Schlöndorff's independently produced *Der junge Törless* (*Young Törless*, 1966), a psychologically detailed adaptation of Robert Musil's antimilitarist novel set in a boys' school before World War I, which won the International Critics' Prize at Cannes. Schlöndorff (b. 1939), who studied at IDHEC (Paris), had worked as an assistant to Louis Malle, Alain Resnais, and Jean-Pierre Melville before directing this feature. In 1979, Schlöndorff's adaptation of Günter Grass's novel *The Tin Drum* (*Die Blechtrommel*) shared the Grand Prix at Cannes with the American director Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, and in 1980, it won the American Academy Award for Best Foreign Film.

Schlöndorff has worked frequently for the commercial studios, where he has collaborated with his wife, Margarethe von Trotta (b. 1942), the scenarist and actress, on a number of important films dealing with feminism and other social and political themes. Another founder of *das neue Kino* was Alexander Kluge (b. 1932), whose *Die Artisten in der Zirkuskuppel: Ratlos* (*The Artists under the Big Top: Disoriented*, 1968) provided a metaphor for the plight of the serious film artist in Germany, in a parable of a young woman who inherits a circus but cannot reform its deeply embedded traditions to create a new role for it in the "media world."

Kluge, a practicing lawyer, novelist, legal scholar, and social theoretician, worked as an assistant to Fritz Lang during Lang's brief return to Germany in the late 1950s, and he is the intellectual father of New German Cinema. As spokesman for the original Oberhausen *junger deutscher* film group, he was responsible for convincing the federal government to establish the Kuratorium and the film schools in Munich and Berlin. Kluge's style is objective, coolly rational, and satirical.

His films almost always involve the precise analysis of some social problem that besets contemporary Germany, focusing on a representative protagonist (often played by his younger sister, Alexandra Kluge [b. 1937]).

Kluge's most significant films of the 1970s are *Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklavin* (*Part-Time Work of a Domestic Slave*, 1974), which examines the issue of women's liberation and political organizing, and *Der starke Ferdinand* (*Strongman Ferdinand*, 1976), a satirical allegory of fascism about an industrial security guard whose paranoid quest for order results in catastrophe for everyone around him. Kluge then brought together ten other New German filmmakers and the Nobel Prize–winning novelist Heinrich Böll to produce *Deutschland im Herbst* (*Germany in Autumn*, 1978) for the Filmverlag der Autoren. This semi-documentary cooperative feature is a rumination on the events of autumn 1977, when a public official was kidnapped and murdered by terrorists, and several of the terrorists later died under mysterious circumstances in prison.

Schlöndorff and Kluge remain important representatives of *das neue Kino*, and in the late 1970s and the 1980s, their ranks were joined by Margarethe von Trotta as a major director in her own right. Von Trotta's breakthrough film was *Die bleierne Zeit* (*The German Sisters/Marianne and Juliane*, 1981), a film about the coming to political awareness of two siblings in the late 1960s and the radically different paths chosen by each. Based on the true story of a member of the Baader-Meinhof terrorist gang, *Die bleierne Zeit* became the second film by a woman to win the Golden Lion at Venice in thirty-nine years (the first was, ironically, Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*).

Von Trotta was the most visible West German female director of the 1980s, but there were many others, and their *Frauenfilme* made a significant impact on *das neue Kino* by establishing a kind of "female aesthetic" that initially combined autobiographical elements with stories of everyday life. The earliest such films were often melodramas in fairly conventional narrative form, but later *Frauenfilme* sometimes took the shape of experimental cultural critiques and radical polemics. Some of the most prominent women directors of this era were Heidi Genee (b. 1938); Doris Dörrie (b. 1955); Jutta Brückner (b. 1941); Ula Stöckl (b. 1938); Helke Sander (b. 1937), founder of the feminist film journal *Frauen und Film* (*Women and Film*) in 1974; Ulrike Ottinger (b. 1942); Monika Treut (b. 1951); and Helma Sanders-Brahms (b. 1940).

International Stature: Fassbinder, Herzog, Wenders, and Others

Outside of Germany itself, the work of three other filmmakers garnered international acclaim for *das neue Kino* during the 1970s. They are Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, and Wim Wenders.

Rainer Werner Fassbinder

Rainer Werner Fassbinder (1946–1982) was extremely well known and very prolific, having completed forty-seven features between 1969 and 1982. Previously an actor, a playwright, and a theater director, he became the undisputed leader of the New German Cinema. Fassbinder began shooting low-budget features while he was still directing experimental theater in Munich, using a stock company of actors and technicians who stayed with him through his later work. Many of these early films were based on scenarios improvised by Fassbinder and concerned with the untreated malaise beneath the affluent surface of contemporary West German society.

His film *Katzelmacher* (1969)—the term is Bavarian slang for a foreigner from the south who is possessed of great sexual potency—is about a Greek *Gastarbeiter*, or immigrant worker (played by Fassbinder), who is lynched by a group of young toughs because he is so attractive to their girls. *Warum läuft Herr R. amok?* (*Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?*, 1969) concerns a successful technical designer who one day murders his wife, their child, and a friend and later commits suicide at his office by hanging himself over an open toilet. In *Der amerikanische Soldat* (*The American Soldier*, 1970), an extended *hommage* to the American gangster film, a young German who has just returned to Munich from service with the American Special Forces in Vietnam is hired by three cops to commit a series of murders; all of the principals, of course, have been killed by the end of the film.

If the plots of these films sound melodramatic, it is because Fassbinder intended them to be. He had a high regard for melodrama as a popular form, as evinced by his admiration for the films of Douglas Sirk (1900–1987), the Danish-born German émigré director who settled in Hollywood during the Nazi years and became master of the widescreen melodrama in

the 1950s. Most of Fassbinder's films are about people who don't "make it," who have somehow failed to reap the material benefits of the German "economic miracle." In depicting the condition of these people, he saw melodrama as a form of heightened realism. He wrote, "I don't find melodrama 'unrealistic'; everyone has the desire to dramatize the things that go on around him . . . everyone has a mass of small anxieties that he tries to get around in order to avoid questioning himself; melodrama comes up hard against them. . . . The only reality that matters is in the viewer's head."

Melodrama, in other words, is about real life, according to Fassbinder. From this perspective, bourgeois culture despises melodrama, preferring much more repressive forms of communication—for example, the high-culture forms of classical music and art, literature, and history—whose aim is to conceal process and function and therefore to keep the bourgeoisie unaware of itself as a class in relationship to other classes. So it was as a Marxist that Fassbinder chose melodrama as his particular form, but it was as a humanist that he chose Marxism, and this is finally what he admired in Sirk: "Sirk has made the tenderest films I know; they are films of someone who loves people and doesn't despise them as we do."

The most obvious stylistic influence on Fassbinder's early films (some of which were shot in fewer than ten days) was Godard, but with *Der Händler der vier Jahreszeiten* (*The Merchant of Four Seasons*, 1971) he began to develop a style of his own. The melodrama, however—stripped bare of theatrics, mock-heroics, and sentimentality, but nearly always photographed in garish color—remained a constant in his work. In *Der Händler*, which was extremely popular with German audiences, a failed engineer enters a loveless marriage and becomes a fruit vendor. Bullied by his wife and betrayed by his friends, he grows terminally depressed and finally drinks himself to death in a bar.

In *Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant* (*The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, 1972), the title character has an affair with a younger woman who constantly betrays her and drives her to a nervous breakdown. *Wildwechsel* (*Wild Home*, 1972) deals with a sexual liaison between a fourteen-year-old girl and a nineteen-year-old boy. The boy is sent to prison for seducing a minor, and after his release, the couple murders the girl's father. *Angst essen Seele auf* (*Fear Eats the Soul/Ali*, 1973), which won the International Critics' Prize at Cannes in 1974, is about the prejudice encountered by a widowed Munich charwoman when she marries a Moroccan immigrant worker some twenty years her junior.

Fontane Effi Briest (*Effi Briest*, 1974), Fassbinder's least characteristic film, is an adaptation of a late-nineteenth-century novel by Theodor Fontane about a young middle-class woman destroyed by rigid social conventions because she is believed to have committed adultery. The film was shot in austere black and white, and Fassbinder used devices such as fades to white, titles, and voice-over narration to replicate the narrative strategies of nineteenth-century fiction.

In *Faustrecht der Freiheit* (*Fox and His Friends*, 1975) and *Mutter Küsters Fahrt zum Himmel* (*Mother Küster's Trip to Heaven*, 1975), the working-class protagonists, like so many of Fassbinder's leading figures, are used shamelessly and abandoned. *Angst vor der Angst* (*Fear of Fear*, 1975) is a study of a happily married middle-class housewife who has a psychotic breakdown; the film, as critic Vincent Canby pointed out, dramatizes one possible end of capitalism, "when everything becomes perfect and, suddenly, nothing works."

Eine Reise ins Licht (*Despair*, 1978), with a scenario by the British playwright Tom Stoppard, is a brilliant adaptation of Vladimir Nabokov's ironic novel about a man who tries to murder his double. Shot in Germany on a big budget (for Fassbinder, anyway, at $2.5 million) and with a predominantly English cast, this film marked a departure from Fassbinder's usual, more improvisational, mode of production. Yet he returned to that practice in *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (*The Marriage of Maria Braun*, 1979), a rambling melodrama set in wartime and postwar Berlin that was a great commercial success in both Germany and America; *Die dritte Generation* (*The Third Generation*, 1979), a film about the relationships among a group of young terrorists; and *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden* (*In a Year of 13 Moons*, 1978), a portrait of the hellish life of a contemporary transsexual. Fassbinder adapted Alfred Döblin's classic novel of working-class life, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929), as a fourteen-part series for German television in 1980. He completed the features *Lili Marlene* (1981), *Lola* (1981), and *Veronika Voss* (1982)—all concerned with wartime and postwar German society—before his death from a drug overdose in 1982. His last film was *Querelle* (1982), a version of Jean Genet's dark novel of homosexuality *Querelle de Brest* (1947).

(right) Hanna Schygulla and Margit Carstensen in *Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant* (*The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*; Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1972).



Clearly, Fassbinder's is a cinema of the underdog, the exploited, and the oppressed. It is also a cinema of great formal beauty grounded in the expressive use of color, lighting, and decor (much of it accountable to the fluid cinematography of Michael Ballhaus [b. 1935], who shot fourteen of Fassbinder's films before relocating to the United States in 1980). Again, Fassbinder's comments on Sirk are instructive:

> Sirk has said: you can't make films about things, you can only make films with things, with people, with light, with flowers, with mirrors, with blood, in fact, with all the fantastic things that make life worth living. Sirk has also said: a director's philosophy is his lighting and camera angles. . . . Sirk's lighting is always as unnatural as possible. Shadows where there shouldn't be any make feelings plausible which one would rather have left unacknowledged. In the same way, the camera angles in *Written on the Wind* are almost always tilted, mostly from below, so that the strange things in the story happen on the screen, not just in the spectator's head. Douglas Sirk's films liberate your head.

So Fassbinder was pictorial, even painterly, but not for the sake of pictorialism, any more than he was melodramatic for the sake of creating melodrama. Of his true ends, he said this: "I don't want to create realism the way it's usually done in films. It's a collision between film and the subconscious that creates a new realism. If my films are right, then a new realism comes about in the head, which changes the social reality." Fassbinder preeminently deserved his reputation as the most exciting young director of the 1970s, as well as the most prolific, and he will probably be remembered as the most original talent to appear in international cinema since Godard.

Werner Herzog

Werner Herzog (b. Werner Herzog Stipetić, 1942) studied literature and theater at the University of Pittsburgh and worked briefly in American television. When he returned to Germany, Herzog became a welder to finance his own short documentaries, of which he made four before shooting his first feature in 1967. Yet it was the bizarre *Auch Zwerge haben klein angefangen* (*Even Dwarfs Started Small*, 1970), shot on location in the Canary Islands, that first brought Herzog to international attention. The film is a black, Buñuelesque fantasy, played entirely by dwarves and midgets, about an abortive revolt staged by the inmates of a correctional institution.

Its grotesque vision of human futility was matched by *Land des Schweigens und der Dunkelheit* (*Land of Silence and Darkness*, 1971), a feature-length documentary about a deaf and blind woman who attempts to liberate others similarly handicapped. Both films speak to the flawed nature of humanity itself, rather than to the insufficiency of particular social institutions, and they emphasize the metaphysical, even mystical, nature of Herzog's central artistic concerns.

To film *Fata Morgana* (1970), Herzog went to the Sahara Desert for what can only be described as a transcendental documentary about disintegration and alienation. The nearly hallucinatory camera style of this film, with its 360-degree pans and seemingly interminable tracking shots, is accompanied by sacred texts from Guatemalan Indian creation myths of the sixteenth century.

Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes (*Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, 1972), among Herzog's most powerful films, was shot on location in the jungles of Brazil and Peru and was based on an actual historical incident of the sixteenth century. It concerns a detachment of Spanish conquistadors in search of El Dorado in the steaming rain

(right) Klaus Kinski and Cecilia Rivera in *Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes* (*Aguirre, the Wrath of God*; Werner Herzog, 1972).



Helmut Doring in *Auch Zwerge haben klein angefangen* (*Even Dwarfs Started Small*; Werner Herzog, 1970).





Josef Bierbichler in *Herz aus Glas* (*Heart of Glass*; Werner Herzog, 1976).

forests of the Andes. The quest is suicidal from beginning to end, because the Spaniards insist on dragging the clumsy accoutrements of modern civilization into the tangled wilderness with them. The film opens with the very image of futility, as about fifty conquistadors in heavy battle dress attempt to maneuver a huge cannon down a plunging forest hillside to the river valley below. What we witness in this sequence is a concrete visualization of the characteristic that dooms all "civilized" peoples: their inability to surrender their dependence on technology in situations that render technology utterly useless.

The film, shot like most of Herzog's subsequent work by Thomas Mauch in splendidly evocative color, is a brilliant study of idealism turned to barbarism through zealotry, and the Nazi past clearly stands behind it. But so, too, does the European conquest of Africa in the late nineteenth century, the American experience in Vietnam, and all other historical tragedies in which high-minded aspirations have ended in a welter of murder, madness, and despair.

Herzog's next film, *Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle* (*Every Man for Himself and God Against All/The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*, 1974), is an equally bizarre allegory of a young man who has been locked in a cellar since birth, without access to memory or speech, and who suddenly appears in a small German town, where he is at first treated as a freak and then gradually taught to live by the systems of rational men. His acquisition of language, logic, religion, and natural philosophy plunges him into despair, and he is finally murdered by the man who had initially redeemed him from his brutish state.

Herzog employs a variety of unpredictable camera angles, awkward framing devices, and unusual lighting effects to transfer Kaspar's experience of perceptual disorientation to the audience. Yet Herzog achieves the film's most spectral and estranging effect by casting a former schizophrenic brought up in various institutions, the pseudonymous "Bruno S.," in the title role. The disaffected but strangely endearing Bruno S. also has the title role in Herzog's *Stroszek* (1977), a balladic tale of three oddly assorted losers—two street musicians and a prostitute—who become friends and set out from contemporary Berlin to find the Promised Land in the backwoods of northern Wisconsin.

Herz aus Glas (*Heart of Glass*, 1976) is simultaneously Herzog's most beautiful and most enigmatic film. Shot in 1976 in Wyoming, Alaska, Utah, Bavaria, Switzerland, and the Skellig Islands off the coast of Ireland, it concerns (apparently) a small medieval village whose entire economy is based on the production of a certain "ruby glass" by its glassworks. The secret of producing this strange crystal dies with an aged glassblower, and for the rest of the film every inhabitant of the town constructs and acts out fantastic hypotheses about the missing formula.

More than in other Herzog films, in *Herz aus Glas*, the interpenetration of fantasy and reality is so thorough that we find it difficult to distinguish the two realms—perhaps because the people of the age he re-creates did not themselves make that distinction. It is in fact this magical view of reality, so alien to the contemporary world, to which Herzog would recall us. Herzog's *Nosferatu* (1979), a U.S.–French–West German co-production backed by 20th Century–Fox, is a studied remake of Murnau's 1922 classic that uses exquisite European locations and rings some interesting changes on the vampire theme. Yet neither it nor the more modestly produced version of Georg Büchner's 1850 play *Woyzeck* (1979) enjoyed the critical esteem accorded Herzog's earlier films.

With *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), Herzog returned (literally) to the terrain of Aguirre in the fact-based tale of a Peruvian rubber baron, played by Klaus Kinski, who attempts in about 1894 to build an opera house in the Amazonian jungle—a project that involves the portage of a 320-ton riverboat across a mountainous, mile-wide isthmus by five hundred Indians. The difficulties that plagued this film in production (including charges by human rights groups that Herzog had enslaved his Indian extras) were legion and became the subject of Les Blank's fascinating documentary *Burden of Dreams* (1982). Our contemporary technology and rationalism have become an infallible religion to us, Herzog warns us, no less than sixteenth-century technology and rationalism were an infallible religion to the conquistadors in Peru. And he suggests that we, no less than Aguirre, are engaged in a self-destructive process of dragging heavy artillery into jungles where there is no one to bombard but ourselves and the monkeys.

More recent Herzog features are *Lessons of Darkness* (1992), *Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans* (2009), and *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2010); the latter was shot in 3-D. Recent documentaries include the award-winning *Grizzly Man* (2005) and *Encounters at the End of the World* (2008).

Wim Wenders

Wim Wenders (b. 1945) was the last director of *das neue Kino* to achieve an international reputation, largely on the basis of his 1976 film *Im Lauf der Zeit*, which won the International Critics' Prize at Cannes in the year of its release. While studying at the Munich Film School from 1962 to 1970, Wenders worked as a critic for cinema journals and newspapers. In 1971, after making several experimental shorts, he completed his first feature, a version of Peter Handke's novel *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter* (*The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*). Ostensibly a murder mystery, *Die Angst des Tormanns* is in fact a film of psychological disintegration, in which a soccer goalie goes quietly mad from the fragmentation and discontinuity of his existence. Through Ozu-like camera placement and a variety of unusual subjective shots, Wenders attempts to induce in the viewer a state of anxiety similar to that experienced by the goalie.

Wenders's major theme is very much the "worldwide homesickness" described by Michael Covino above, the anxiety-ridden sense of psychological and geographical dislocation induced by living in the modern world. Wenders's next film, *Im Lauf der Zeit* (*Kings of the Road*, 1976), provides his most brilliant exposition of this theme. It is a story of two men in their thirties who meet by accident on the road and begin an aimless journey across the desolate plains of northern Germany. Bruno lives in his van and survives by driving from one country town to another, repairing broken movie projectors.

Strikingly photographed in crisp black and white by Wenders's cinematographer, Robby Müller, *Im Lauf der Zeit* is nearly three hours long (176 minutes), but the film is so carefully and uniquely composed that we barely notice the passage of time (which, as the original title announces, is what the film is really about). Nothing much happens to Bruno and Robert in the course of time, and very little is communicated between them, but Wenders has a genius for creating cinematic metaphors for the contemporary malaise afflicting the two men. Extremely long takes and slow traveling shots, unusual camera angles and framing devices, and above all, the manipulation of off-screen space generate in the viewer a sense of perceptual dislocation corresponding to the spiritual disorientation of Bruno and Robert. In this sense, *Im Lauf der Zeit*, like other Wenders films, is extremely self-contained: it can be said to describe itself by calling into question conventional modes of film structure.

Wenders continued the theme of dislocation in the form of an international thriller with his first



Rüdiger Vogler and Hanns Zischler in *Im Lauf der Zeit* (*Kings of the Road*; Wim Wenders, 1976).

(relatively) big-budget production, a version of Patricia Highsmith's novel *Ripley's Game*, titled *Der amerikanische Freund* (*The American Friend*, 1977). In 1980, Wenders collaborated with the late American director Nicholas Ray to produce *Lightning over Water/ Nick's Movie*, a sensitive film about Ray's attempt to continue his work while dying of cancer. After the ruminative *Tokyo-Ga* (1985), a self-described "filmed diary" of his search for the vanished Tokyo inscribed in the films of Yasujiro Ozu (1903–1963), Wenders returned to Germany and produced a magical masterpiece in *Der Himmel über Berlin* (*The Sky over Berlin/ Wings of Desire*, 1987), a film written in collaboration with Handke about angels watching over the people of Berlin.

Wenders next made several films devoted to the art of cinema—*Lisbon Story* (1994) is about a director making a silent film in contemporary Portugal, while *Die Gebrüder Skladanowsky* (also known as *A Trick of the Light*, 1995) is about the two German brothers who developed the Bioskop projector and gave the first public performance of motion pictures at the Berlin Wintergarten on November 1, 1895, beating out the debut of the Lumière Cinématographe in Paris by nearly two months. Yet his most successful film of the 1990s was undoubtedly *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999), a documentary about a group of aging Cuban musicians brought together by Ry Cooder to make a CD, shot on location in New York and Havana. More recent Wenders films include *The Million Dollar Hotel* (2000), *Land of Plenty* (2004), and *Pina* (2011), about the choreographer and dancer Pina Bausch, shot in 3-D.

Unlike many of his associates in the Filmverlag, Wenders is not openly political. Yet he has said that "film language is always political: it is either exploitation or it isn't exploitation . . . not only the story that is told, but the way it is told." In this regard, Wenders claims as his masters Yasujiro Ozu and the American action director Anthony Mann, both of whom had a brilliant facility for the creation of spatial metaphors. Like his frequent collaborator Peter Handke, Wenders seems to have a clear vision of the modern world's spiritual confusion and a tremendous talent for translating that confusion into the terms of his art.

Hans-Jürgen Syberberg and Others

A fourth director of international stature, one associated with *das neue Kino* but not of it, is Hans-Jürgen Syberberg (b. 1935). Originally from what became East Germany, he escaped to the West when he was seventeen, ultimately studying theater at the University of Munich. After working for several years as a director for Bavarian television, he began making low-budget features in the late 1960s and spent much of the 1970s producing his "German trilogy" of fictionalized documentaries on the irrational in Teutonic history and myth. The culmination of these works was *Hitler: Ein Film aus Deutschland* (*Hitler: A Film from Germany*, 1977; distributed in the United States as *Our Hitler*), shot in twenty days after four years of planning on a budget of $500,000. This seven-hour film is a complex, multifaceted attempt to answer the central, agonizing question posed by the trilogy and by twentieth-century German history: Why Hitler? The answer is that Hitler became "the greatest filmmaker of all time," staging National Socialism, World War II, and the Holocaust; engaging the irrationalism of the German people; and finally, making Germany part of a grand, all-consuming myth.

During the late 1970s and the 1980s, a number of directors emerged from *das neue Kino* whose work has had less cumulative effect than that of Syberberg and his contemporaries but has nonetheless received international attention. The documentary-like features of Peter Lilienthal (b. 1929) often have a political theme, as in *David* (1978), about a young Jew struggling to survive in Nazi Germany; *Dear Mr. Wonderful* (1982), shot on location in working-class neighborhoods in New York; and *Angesichts der Wälder* (*Facing the Forest*, 1995), a political drama about the tensions between Palestinians and Israelis, set in a forest preserve. Edgar Reitz (b. 1932) became world-famous through a single remarkable work, the sixteen-hour *Heimat* (*Homeland*, 1984), which recounts the history of twentieth-century Germany as reflected in the lives of three families from the Rhineland village of Hunsrück; it took him more than five years to complete and has been called "the fulfillment of all the hopes of the New German cinema over the past two decades," as well as a milestone in contemporary film history.

The remarkably eclectic Fassbinder protégé and opera director Werner Schroeter (b. 1945) moves with ease between the experimental underground, the historical epic, contemporary social commentary, and the art film. His openly gay perspective was shared by Rosa von Praunheim (b. Holger Mischwitzky, 1942), Lothar Lambert (b. 1944), and Frank Ripploh (1949–2002), who formed the core of the so-called Berlin Underground during the 1980s. Their films tended to be both polemical and confrontational—especially von Praunheim's—and they often took the form of outrageous comedies. Members of the Berlin Underground shot their films in 16mm on extremely low budgets; the films were often written, directed, photographed, and edited by an auteur who was also their star.

Jean-Marie Straub and Marxist Aesthetics

A final figure who must be mentioned as having inspired and influenced *das neue Kino*, although his own aesthetic concerns were independent of it, is the French-born Jean-Marie Straub (b. 1933). Straub, who has lived and worked in Germany since 1958, is the patron saint of minimalist cinema—cinema that involves minimal dependence on the technical conventions of the medium as a narrative form. Specifically, this means the consistent use of direct sound, natural lighting, nonnarrative editing and camera styles, and of course, nonactors. Straub worked as an assistant to Robert Bresson during the 1950s and was permanently influenced by his austerity of technique, especially that of *Les dames du Bois de Boulogne* (1945).

Philosophically, Straub regards cinema as a material, rather than a narrative, form. While narrative forms tell stories that encourage audience identification with fictitious characters and events, material forms can be said to create primary experiences for their audience, rather than secondary or vicarious ones. It is the difference between being told a story about a madman or a "wild child" and being asked to participate in the experience of perceptual disorientation and disaffection that characterizes a state of madness or savagery.

In pursuing his own vision of materialist cinema, Straub created—in collaboration with his wife, Danièle Huillet (1936–2006)—a number of extraordinary films whose structures of light, space, and sound approach the mathematical precision of musical composition. As with musical composition, Straub/Huillet's films are "about" what happens to the viewer while watching them, as much as they are "about" their ostensible content. That is, in their restraint, these films create a vacuum that the viewer must fill with the primary experience of his or her own life, forcing introspection, rather than encouraging vicarious identification with invented characters and plots.





Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet.

It is this theoretical assumption that links Straub/Huillet with the young filmmakers of *das neue Kino*, although as individual artists they were more clearly members of the experimental avant-garde. Straub/Huillet and their followers take the Marxist position that perception is an ideological, as well as a physiological, phenomenon, or at least that perception is ideologically and culturally conditioned. Cinema is a communications medium whose basic signifying unit (the shot) is a discrete unit of perception: every shot, and every individual frame within a shot, offers a unique perceptual perspective on some event or object.

Yet in the conventional narrative cinema of Western capitalist countries, those perceptual perspectives have been ideologically appropriated to create fictions about life, and we, the audience, have been ideologically conditioned to expect and receive these fictions. From the Marxist perspective, fiction or narrative is defined as a bourgeois form designed to propagate illusions about the real nature of our society and our lives within it, in order to divert our attention from the exploitation, violence, and oppression that are the necessary by-products of our economic system; the Marxists insist that our cinema (and most of our other art forms) has traditionally been a narrative medium whose purpose is the creation of illusionist spectacle that serves the ideology of the ruling class.

What the new breed of radical filmmakers attempted is the deconstruction of bourgeois perceptual ideology through a deconstruction of conventional cinematic language—language that has, since its inception and throughout its history (with notable exceptions during the periods of Soviet silent realism, Italian neorealism, and the French New Wave) been a bourgeois medium for the production of narrative pleasure. In other words, the cinema's enslavement to a narrative code of vision has radically restricted its potential for the expression of new cultural realities. The vast range of ideas, feelings, perceptions, and experience that film is capable of communicating has barely been touched on in the over one hundred years of its history as a narrative form.

Yet radical filmmakers such as Straub/Huillet and the leaders of *das neue Kino* attempted to tap that

(left) Heinz Schubert in *Hitler: Ein Film aus Deutschland* (*Hitler: A Film from Germany*; Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, 1977).

potential as never before, and it was this effort—much of it successful—that lent the quality of strangeness and mystery and otherness to their films. They were groping toward a new cinematic language with which to express the formerly inexpressible, and the process demands that the audience feel, see, and think things formerly alien to the experience of film watching.

Unfortunately, this same process can anger an audience that wants to be diverted by illusion, rather than to struggle to acquire new codes of vision and experience. And this process of audience disaffection occurred in West Germany during the era of *das neue Kino*, just as it occurred in France during the New Wave. With a few exceptions, the movement's films were not popular with German audiences, who found them obscure, depressing, and overly intellectual. The largest markets were in France, Great Britain, and the United States, where many *das neue Kino* directors won festival prizes and became fashionable cult figures among the intelligentsia.

It is ironic that a cinema that aspired to create a new vision of the world could not find a popular audience, while the illusionist spectacle it sought to replace enjoyed mass approval. In West Germany itself, the films with the biggest box-office receipts during the 1970s and the 1980s were American super-productions such as *The Godfather, Part II* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974), *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975), *Cross of Iron* (Sam Peckinpah, 1977; shot in Germany), *Return of the Jedi* (Richard Marquand, 1983), *Ghostbusters* (Ivan Reitman, 1984), *Out of Africa* (Sydney Pollack, 1985), and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (Spielberg, 1989).



Franka Potente in *Run Lola Run* (*Lola rennt*; Tom Tykwer, 1998).

Obviously, a major problem for the filmmakers of *das neue Kino* was distribution. While the Film Subsidies Board generously supported independent production of all sorts, the films of the New German cinema grew too elaborate and too numerous for the exhibition outlets available to them. During the 1970s, some *neue Kino* directors began to make films for large production companies to achieve blanket distribution—for example, Fassbinder shot the $2.5 million international co-production *Despair* (1978) for Bavaria Film, Herzog's *Nosferatu* (1979) was underwritten by Fox, and Wenders's *Hammett* (1982) was finally produced for several million dollars after four years of fits and starts. During the 1980s, budgets of $3 million and more were not uncommon for period pieces such as Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo* (1982) and Schlöndorff's *Un amour de Swann* (1984). Geissendörfer's *Der Zauberberg* (1982) cost $10 million, and co-production with the ZDF television network and with other countries became routine.

Like the New Wave, *das neue Kino* finally expired of its own aesthetic successes—so many aspiring new talents were able to direct their own films in such a short span of time that the market became glutted with them and the movement, as such, collapsed—although not before it had flourished brilliantly for two decades, changing the form of film language for many years to come.

Since 1990, the film industry of a reunited Germany has continued its struggle to survive against both American and other European distributors, with unhappy results. In 1991, domestically produced films captured only 10 percent of the market, while Hollywood dominated with a 70 percent share. The privatization of the obsolete DEFA-Neubabelsberg studios of the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany) did little initially to boost industry prospects. Even with heavy co-production financing from the nation's two public television networks, ARD and ZDF, German films have been unable to recapture the 25 percent market share that most analysts consider necessary to survival, although the national success of Joseph Vilsmaier's $12.5-million antiwar epic *Stalingrad* (1993) suggested that German audiences would still rally to serious domestic films that strike a responsive chord. And, in fact, by 1997 Germany's market share had increased to 17.3 percent, thanks largely to the support of five federal state subsidy boards that, together with public and private television and the Bonn Economic Ministry, was contributing $170 million in production funds annually to the industry.

Tom Tykwer's *Run Lola Run* (*Lola rennt*, 1998) attracted lavish praise for its technically dazzling structure, in which the same action-packed trajectory—a



Isabelle Huppert and Benoît Magimel in *The Piano Teacher* (*La pianiste*; Michael Haneke, 2001).

young woman attempting to raise DM 20,000 in twenty minutes to save her boyfriend's life—is repeated three times with slight variations, producing entirely different results each time. Tykwer (b. 1965) had been exploring the theme of overlapping/alternative temporal trajectories since *Winter Sleepers* (*Winterschläfer*, 1997).

The big domestic hit of 2000, in fact, was a homegrown horror film, Stefan Ruzowitzky's *Anatomie* (*Anatomy*), which crossed the Frankenstein story with neo-Nazis in a contemporary medical-school setting. The film was extremely popular with German audiences and inspired its director to make a sequel in 2002 (*Anatomie 2*). Like Tykwer, Ruzowitzky writes his own screenplays.

Another German writer director who scored critical and popular successes at the turn of the century is Michael Haneke (b. 1942), a Munich-born filmmaker working in Austria and other European Union venues, whose films formulated an autocritique of the media's debasement of human values. In *Funny Games* (1997), *Code Unknown* (*Code inconnu*, 2000), and *The Piano Teacher* (*La pianiste*, 2001; winner of three top awards at Cannes), for example, Haneke eschewed the formal austerity of his earliest films to create a disturbingly explicit cinema of postmodern malaise focusing on the spectator's sadomasochistic complicity in the act of representation. Haneke's *The White Ribbon* (2009), which probed the roots of Fascism in a small German town on the eve of World War I, won the Palme d'Or at Cannes; and *Amour* (2012), an unflinching meditation on aging and death, won both the Palme d'Or and the American Academy Award for Best Foreign Film.

With these notable exceptions, German cinema today is dominated by light comedy and other escapist genres, whose main producer–distributor is Neue Constantin Film. This reincarnation of Constantin Film, founded in 1949 and bankrupted in 1977, is managed by Bernd Eichinger, who adopted a policy of competing with Hollywood products head to head in every genre from action-adventure (*Das Boot*, 1981) to teenage sex comedy (*Girls on Top*, 2001). In this climate, it seems somehow appropriate that one of the most popular German films of the new century, Ruzowitzky's *Anatomie*, was produced by a newly established subsidiary of Columbia, Deutsche Columbia Pictures Film Produktion, which funnels most of its profits back to the United States through German banks in Frankfurt. (The film was in fact dubbed into English and distributed in the United States, where it earned nearly $6 million to completely recoup its negative cost of DM 8.4 million, or about $4 million; its entire German earnings were thus pure profit for Columbia.)



Josef Kroner in *The Shop on Main Street* (*Obchod na korze;* Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos, 1965).



16

European Renaissance: East

All of the countries of Eastern Europe, except for the former Soviet Union, were occupied by the Nazis or collaborated with them during World War II, and those that had strong national film industries at the time, such as Czechoslovakia and Hungary, saw them subverted for the purpose of propaganda. When the war ended, these countries were "liberated" by the Soviet army and found themselves once again occupied by a foreign totalitarian power. Gradually, but with much brutality, the Soviet government placed its own puppets at the heads of the Eastern European states, Stalinized the national governments, and forced the entire area into the Soviet bloc—a move formalized by the Warsaw Pact of 1955.

Among the first acts of the new regimes was to nationalize the Eastern European film industries in order to use them, as the Nazis had, for the production of political propaganda. In Czechoslovakia and Poland, nationalization took place in conjunction with the establishment of state-supported film schools, repeating the pattern of the Soviet Union just after its revolution. The Czech film school, the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Dramatic Arts (FAMU), was founded in Prague in 1945; the Polish version, the Leon Schiller State Film School at Łódź, was established in 1948.

Ultimately, each of the major Eastern European nations would have its own state-operated film school. The thoroughness of the postwar nationalization meant that there would

always be a close relationship between film and politics in Eastern Europe. Generally speaking, in times of oppression, the Eastern European cinemas were used for the purpose of political indoctrination; during periods of liberalization, cinema became a vehicle for social criticism and ideological debate. For this reason, cinema was one of the most important arts for the Eastern European intelligentsia.

During the repressive postwar years from 1945 to 1953, few Eastern European countries produced significant films. Most adopted official Soviet-style "socialist realism," as decreed at the first Congress of the Soviet Writers Union in 1934, which demanded that the everyday life of the socialist worker be glorified at the expense of all thematic analysis and formal experiment. In the Soviet Union itself, this policy had succeeded in effacing the great avant-garde heritage of the 1920s, putting its creators either out of work (Vertov and Kuleshov) or under strict ideological control (Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Dovzhenko).

After the war, the situation grew even worse, as Andrei Zhdanov, the party boss in charge of ideological affairs, demanded rigid conformity to the style. When Stalin died in 1953, however, there was a brief period of liberalization, followed by an official policy of de-Stalinization that witnessed a distinct move away from the style of socialist realism in many Eastern European cinemas. The first to change was the cinema of Poland.

Poland

The Polish School

Before World War II, Polish cinema had been a rather modest affair. Perhaps the most significant prewar development was the founding in 1929 of a radical avant-garde film society, the Society of the Devotees of the Artistic Film, or START, which included the future directors Wanda Jakubowska (1907–1998) and Aleksander Ford (1908–1980), whose *Knights of the Teutonic Order* (*Krzyżacy*, 1960) was to become the first great Polish film epic; as well as the film historian Jerzy Toeplitz (1909–1995). With the establishment of the socialist state after the war, the provisional government nationalized the film industry under a single centralized authority, Film Polski, in 1945. The first postwar films were about the horrors that the country had endured during the Nazi Occupation, but in general the rigid dogma of socialist realism kept the standards of Polish film at a relatively low level until after the death of Stalin in 1953.

In 1954, things began to change. At a meeting of the Polish Association of Cinema and Theater, Jerzy Toeplitz, then director of the Łódź Film School, attacked the tenets of socialist realism and called for a new national cinema. A year later, Film Polski was reorganized as a confederation of individual, self-contained production units known collectively as the United Groups of Film Producers. These mutually competitive production groups (*zespóły*)—first eight and finally ten—were each headed by a senior director and possessed considerable artistic autonomy, but until 1989 they depended exclusively on the state for production subsidies and distribution. Simultaneously with the founding of the *zespóły*, the first generation of trained directors emerged from Łódź, and in the fall of 1956, the Polish Communist Party chief, Władisław Gomułka, decreed a thorough de-Stalinization of Poland. Thus the way was cleared for the Polish film movement known as the Polish School, the influence of which was international in scope from 1956 to 1963.

The first major talents to rise from the Łódź Film School were Jerzy Kawalerowicz (1922–2007), Andrzej Munk (1921–1961), and Andrzej Wajda (b. 1926). Kawalerowicz's most significant film is the visually stylized, tension-charged historical drama *Mother Joan of the Angels* (*Matka Joanna od aniołów*, 1961), about the demonic possession of a nun in a seventeenth-century Polish convent. After graduating from Łódź, Andrzej Munk made two notable features before his death in an automobile accident in September 1961—the antiheroic war film *Heroism* (*Eroica*, 1957), which satirized the Polish national devotion to lost causes,



Knights of the Teutonic Order (*Krzyżacy*; Aleksander Ford, 1960).



Zbigniew Cybulski in *Ashes and Diamonds* (*Popiół i diament*; Andrzej Wajda, 1958).

and *Bad Luck* (*Zezowate szczęście*, 1959), an ironic look at opportunism in postwar Polish society. At the time of his death, Munk had nearly finished shooting *The Passenger* (*Pasazerka*), a film about Auschwitz that would surely have been his masterpiece.

Much more characteristic and formative was the work of Andrzej Wajda, the first Eastern European director whose films were widely shown in the West. The son of a Polish cavalry officer, Wajda studied painting at the Fine Arts Academy in Kraków before attending the Łódź Film School, and in 1954 he made *A Generation* (*Pokolenie*). This film, the first in a trilogy about his country's horrific experience of the war, established Wajda as a major European director and brought Polish cinema to international attention. The second part of the trilogy was the unrelievedly grim *Canal* (*Kanał*, 1956), adapted by Jerzy Stefan Stawiński from his own novel. The film deals with hundreds of Home Army Resistance fighters who find themselves trapped beneath the streets in the city's sewer system during the brutally suppressed Warsaw uprising of 1944. Wajda's despairing vision of heroes doomed to die like sewer rats is the very prototype of the romantic fatalism that came to characterize the Polish School.

So, too, is the last and greatest film in Wajda's war trilogy, *Ashes and Diamonds* (*Popiół i diament*, 1958). It depicts a few hours in the life of a young Resistance fighter, Maciek Chełmicki, on May 9, 1945, the first day after the war in Europe. Maciek has been ordered by the military commander of his nationalist underground unit to go to a provincial city and assassinate the new Communist Party district secretary. The film's rich visual symbolism lends it universality of theme, but *Ashes and Diamonds* also contains an implicit comment on some specific difficulties of a traditional society's adjustment to a revolution, and it offers Wajda's most disillusioned view of the futility of heroism in the modern world. Significantly, the part of Maciek was the first major role of Zbigniew Cybulski (1927–1967), the brilliant and versatile young actor who became the icon of the Polish School's romantic pessimism from 1958 until his accidental death in 1967.

With *Everything for Sale* (*Wszystko na sprzedaż*, 1969), Wajda again hit his stride and made his most personal film. Like Fellini's *8½* (1963) and Truffaut's *Day for Night* (1973), *Everything for Sale* is about a filmmaker in the process of making a film and therefore about the relationship between cinematic illusion and reality, but it is more self-reflexive than the other works that deal with this theme. The film was inspired by the gruesome death in January 1967 of the actor Cybulski, who was run over by a train that he was attempting to board. Cybulski was not only Wajda's close personal friend and Poland's most popular star, but—like James Dean in America—he was an important cultural symbol of a whole generation's attitude toward life; his senseless death shocked the nation. *Everything for Sale* memorializes that death and poses some disturbing questions about the morality of art.

Most of Wajda's films since 1968 have been political in nature. *Man of Marble* (*Człowiek z marmuru*, 1977), for example, is a sweeping indictment of officially fabricated postwar Polish history, and *Without Anesthesia* (*Bez znieczulenia*, 1978) concerns the political corruption of the Polish news media. He confronted Poland's government head on in *Man of Iron* (*Człowiek z żelaza*, 1981), which became the standard-bearer for the new Solidarity movement and made Wajda himself, more than ever before, a symbol of the greatness and courage of Polish cinema. As a benefactor of such younger directors as Feliks Falk (b. 1941), Agnieszka Holland (b. 1948), and Janusz Kijowski (b. 1948) in his Production Unit X and as a filmmaker in his own right, Andrzej Wajda established himself as both the aesthetic grand master and the moral conscience of Polish film.

The Second Generation

The so-called Polish School came to an end in the early 1960s, when the Gomułka regime began to attack the national cinema for presenting a negative view of everyday Polish life. At the Thirteenth Party Congress in July 1964, Wajda's *Innocent Sorcerers* (*Niewinni czarodzieje*, 1960) and Roman Polanski's *Knife in the Water* (*Nóż w wodzie*, 1962) were singled out for special abuse as examples of this tendency. The Łódź Film School came under fire, too, because four-fifths of the country's forty-eight professional directors had been trained there. Thus, the generation of filmmakers that succeeded Wajda's made their first features in Poland, but as social and political conditions became increasingly repressive they left, one by one, to work in the West.

The two most prominent members of this generation were Roman Polanski (b. 1933) and Jerzy Skolimowski (b. 1938), both of whom attended the Łódź Film School and were decisively influenced by the French New Wave. Polanski's first feature, *Knife in the Water*, is an economical, tension-charged account of sexual





(top right) Jolanta Umecka and Leon Niemczyk in *Knife in the Water* (*Nóż w wodzie*; Roman Polanski, 1962).

(bottom right) Mia Farrow in *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1968).

rivalry among a husband, a wife, and a young stranger during a weekend sailing trip on the husband's yacht. The film achieved widespread recognition as a brilliant feature debut, and Polanski subsequently made three films in England, working from his own screenplays. *Repulsion* (1965) is a chillingly precise study of an individual's descent into madness under the pressure of sexual neurosis and one of the classic studies of mental breakdown in modern cinema.

In 1968, Polanski came to the United States to direct the most popular and commercially successful of all his films, *Rosemary's Baby*. This tale of witchcraft and Satanism was shot on location in New York City for Paramount. The tension between its muted naturalistic style and its horrific material makes the film a classic of the genre of demonic possession.

Polanski traveled to England in 1971 to do a personalized, hyperrealistic version of *Macbeth*, and he subsequently returned to America to direct *Chinatown* (1974), an extremely successful essay in film noir set in Los Angeles during the 1930s. *Chinatown* is Polanski's most conventional film in terms of structure, but it nevertheless conveys the sense of evil, menace, and sexual tension that has become the hallmark of his work. Polanski's thematic obsession with cruelty, violence, and the forces that produce them must also reflect the uniquely grim circumstances of his own life. In 1941, when he was eight years old, Polanski's parents were both sent to concentration camps—his father to Matthausen, where he managed to survive; his mother to Auschwitz, where she died—and he was forced to live a wretched existence in hiding until the end of the war.

In 1969, his pregnant wife, the actress Sharon Tate, along with several of her friends, was brutally murdered and mutilated by the Charles Manson gang in one of the most repugnant crimes of the decade. Later, Polanski himself was charged with the statutory rape of a thirteen-year-old girl in Los Angeles County and fled the country for France to avoid prosecution.

There, he directed a superb version of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (*Tess*, 1979), Thomas Hardy's tragic novel of innocence destroyed, and continued to make films for the American market for the next two decades. Returning to film in Poland for the first time since *Knife in the Water*, Polanski produced *The Pianist* (2002), a chilling study of Jewish artists struggling to survive in the Warsaw Ghetto. The film was nominated for seven Academy Awards and won three, including Best Director, which Polanski was unable to accept in person because of his continuing status as a fugitive from U.S. justice. After shooting a version of Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (2005) in Prague, Polanski made the internationally acclaimed thriller, *The Ghost Writer* (2010), and turned to social satire with *Carnage* (2011) and *Venus in Furs* (2013).

Jerzy Skolimowski began his career as an actor and as co-scriptwriter for Wajda's *Innocent Sorcerers* (1960). He became a student at the Łódź Film School in 1961, and collaborated with Polanski on the script of *Knife in the Water* the same year. Between matriculation and graduation in 1964, Skolimowski worked continuously on his first feature, which was released as *Identification Marks: None* (*Rysopis*, 1964). A loosely structured account of an expelled student's last ten hours of civilian life before entering the military, this film freely appropriated the stylistic devices of *cinéma vérité* and the New Wave. Like other Skolimowski protagonists (usually played by Skolimowski himself), the student is an outsider whose alienated vision of his society is implicitly critical.

Barrier (*Bariera*, 1966) firmly established Skolimowski as the principal spokesman for his generation, as well as one of the most important Polish directors to emerge in the 1960s. Influenced by Godard, this film is an intricately stylized account of a student's mythic journey through contemporary Poland, and its surrealist mise-en-scène makes it Skolimowski's most bizarre and poetic work to date. *Hands Up!* (*Ręce do góry*, 1967), his most scathing attack yet on the rigidity and barrenness of modern Polish society, and the film that he personally regards as his best and most mature work, was banned by Polish authorities on its completion, and at that point Skolimowski—like Polanski before him—became an émigré. Moving to England, he produced



Hands Up! (*Ręce do góry*; Jerzy Skolimowski, 1967; released 1981).

The Shout (1978) and *Moonlighting* (1982), both of which won international awards. Ultimately, Skolimowski relocated to Hollywood, where he continued to produce films sporadically—for example, *The Lightship* (1985), *Torrents of Spring* (1989), and *Essential Killing* (2010).

The Third Polish Cinema

Of the third postwar generation of Polish directors, sometimes called collectively the Third Polish Cinema, the most important is Krzysztof Zanussi (b. 1939). Trained as a physicist, Zanussi posits a deterministic social and biological order, while simultaneously offering the hope that human beings may somehow free themselves from it. His films tend to focus on a single contemporary problem and treat it in a highly analytic manner. In *The Structure of Crystals* (*Struktura kryształu*, 1969), for example, the focus is on the meeting of two former university classmates—one an extremely successful physicist, the other the manager of an isolated weather station. The film is a dissection of the two men's inability to communicate with each other about their separate visions and values.

During the 1970s, Zanussi made similarly provocative films that all use the multiple resources of cinema, drama, and language (including that of mathematics) to examine some aspect of contemporary Polish society and the individual's position within it. As head of Production Unit Tor, however, Zanussi became closely identified with the "cinema of moral anxiety" in the Solidarity era, and his film *The Constant Factor* (*Constans*), which won the Jury Prize at Cannes in 1980, was one of its primary documents.

The last major Polish filmmaker who must be considered here is an internationally famous animator who turned, with notable success, to the production of live-action features. Walerian Borowczyk (1923–2006) was trained as a painter and was already an established artist when he won the Polish National Prize for his graphic work in 1953. He made his first animated shorts in collaboration with Jan Lenica (1928–2001), one of the great modern innovators in the field. These films tended to be menacing surrealistic fables such as *House* (*Dom*, 1958), which portrays the paranoid hallucinations of a young girl left alone overnight in her house.

In 1959, Borowczyk emigrated to Paris (Lenica followed in 1963), where he produced a series of animated shorts projecting a world of absurd violence and private nightmare. In some twenty-five disquieting allegorical shorts and a single feature made between 1959 and 1967, Borowczyk experimented with every known form of animation to project his vision of ironic, hallucinated horror. He painted images directly on his film stock, combined live action with animation, and regularly employed collage, pixilation, and film loops.

When he turned to short live-action films in 1966 with *Rosalie* and *Gavotte*, Borowczyk remained essentially a graphic artist with a fine sense of the cruelty of modern existence. His first live-action feature, *Goto, l'île d'amour* (*Goto, Island of Love*, 1969), was an absurdist fable of a barbaric dictatorship on a paradisiacal tropical island, full of inane brutality and arbitrary destruction. Borowczyk then became preoccupied with sexual perversity as an image of modern disorder. His *Contes immoraux* (*Immoral Tales*, 1974), a visually lush anthology film containing four separate tales of sexual perversion, became the second most popular film in France in the year of its release.

The *Story of Sin* (*Dzieje grzechu*, 1975), which Borowczyk made in his native Poland and which was the most popular domestic film of 1975, is a surrealistic allegory of an innocent young girl who is drawn down into a terrible vortex of crime, perversion, and murder. *La bête* (*The Beast*, 1975), a parable of sexual obsession and insatiability concerning a hideous beast and a lovely maiden, is probably his best. From both his live-action features and his animated films, it is clear that Borowczyk shared with many of his compatriots a fatalistic and absurdist vision of life. His work embodies a profound pessimism for the human heritage of dissolution, disorder, and decay. Yet pessimism is not cynicism and need not lead to despair. There is in Borowczyk's films a kind of affirmation in his utter outrage at human misery and in his sense of horror at the human stupidities that produce it. His best work was significantly responsible for bringing Polish cinema to a position of international prominence.

That position was temporarily weakened in the late 1960s, during the political crisis that followed the student demonstrations of March 1968. In an attempt to forestall the kind of liberalization then sweeping Czechoslovakia, the Gomułka regime tightened censorship, increased police surveillance, and purged the leadership of the entire Polish film industry. The shake-up was blatantly anti-Semitic. In 1968, Poland produced only twenty films, most of them officially sanctioned literary adaptations, and several older films such as Wajda's *Samson* (1961) were banned.

(right) Paloma Picasso in *Contes immoraux* (*Immoral Tales*; Walerian Borowczyk, 1974).



By 1971, however, Gomułka had been forced from office by the more moderate Edward Gierek, who relaxed censorship and promoted the reorganization of the state production units to give them more autonomy, which in turn enabled new talents to appear. Yet in the late 1970s, as the result of a steadily deteriorating economy, Poland was plunged into a social crisis of major proportions that ultimately led to the militant strikes of the summer of 1980 and to the formation of the free labor union movement Solidarity (Solidarność), 1980–1981, under the leadership of Lech Wałęsa (b. 1943).

Solidarity and Polish Cinema

Like the Czech New Wave during the 1960s (see pp. 492–498), Polish cinema during the 1970s played a crucial role in crystalizing public consciousness about the need for liberalization. Unlike the subtly allusive Czech films, however, the Polish films were often abrasive and directly confrontational in their social criticism. Poles created what they called *kino moralnego niepokoju*—"a cinema of moral anxiety"—whose central theme was the isolation experienced by people of integrity in a corrupt and dishonest society. Despite low budgets and a documentary-like austerity of means, these films were immensely popular with Polish audiences (whose contempt for the hypocrisies of the state-controlled broadcast and print media was nearly universal), and the films became closely identified with the nation's yearning for greater political and social freedom.



Man of Iron (Andrzej Wajda, 1981).

Thus, when Solidarity was set up in August 1980 in Gdańsk (formerly Danzig)—the site, appropriately, of both the 1970 Lenin Shipyard strikes that helped force Gomułka's resignation and of Poland's most important film festival—not only did most Polish filmmakers support its demands for economic and political reform, but nine out of ten became members, founding their own self-governing union in September (the Cinematography Workers' Independent Trade Union), a distinct entity from the officially sanctioned Polish Filmmakers' Association (PFA).

During the next sixteen months, Polish filmmakers enjoyed unprecedented creative and political freedom. Within a year, in fact, Poland had become one of the most talked-about film-producing countries in the world, and the Eighth Gdańsk Festival of Polish Films, held in August 1981, was widely recognized to be a celebration of this fact. Its centerpiece was Andrzej Wajda's docudrama *Man of Iron* on the birth of Solidarity, a sort of sequel to *Man of Marble* and winner of the 1981 Cannes Grand Prix. These films were intended as rallying cries for Solidarity and the newly won right to strike that it briefly guaranteed.

Appropriately, the First National Solidarity Congress ran concurrently with the Eighth Gdańsk Festival, and both concluded with a three-day program of twenty-six Solidarity-inspired documentaries titled "A Document of Protest." Several months later, in the euphoria inspired by the new freedom, Wajda and nine other directors announced plans to hold their own festival in Warsaw in February 1982, with the expressed purpose of circumventing Film Polski and arranging co-production with the West.

Then, suddenly, it was over. On the morning of December 13, 1981, Poland was invaded from within, as the military, led by General Wojciech Jaruzelski, abruptly replaced the civilian government and declared martial law with the moral and tactical support of the Soviet Union, which had its largest ally surrounded by fifty-nine armored divisions and garrisoned by four others when the coup took place. A curfew was imposed, assembly banned, travel restricted, and all telephone and telex lines cut; strikes were broken by armed force, Solidarity leaders arrested en masse, and the union itself brutally suppressed. The consequences for the film industry were immediate and grim. Undercapitalized and financially dependent by law on the state, Polish cinema found itself threatened with extinction through bankruptcy. All of the nation's 1,180 film theaters were closed under the ban on public assembly, cutting the industry's immediate cash flow, and when the theaters reopened



Grażyna Szapołowska in *No End* (*Bez końca*; Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1985).

two months later, Polish audiences discovered a significantly changed national cinema.

Pro-party conservatives were temporarily given control of the industry to make orthodox World War II epics and historical films. The Gdańsk Festival was suppressed, and most films produced during the flowering of Solidarity were banned, many without ever having been released. In May 1983, Wajda was dismissed as head of Film Unit X for having made films "which have nothing in common with the cultural policy of the state." At the same time, Unit X and Zanussi's Unit Tor—those most closely associated with the "cinema of moral anxiety" and, ironically, the two units with the greatest margin of success over costs—were denounced by the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers Party (PZPR) as "oppositional, demagogic, and existential."

In December 1983, Wajda resigned as chairman of the Polish Filmmakers' Association (a position that he had held since 1978), along with the organization's entire governing board, and it seemed briefly as if the group might disintegrate, as had a number of other artists' unions under martial law.

After 1984, when the Gdańsk Festival was reopened, a kind of uneasy truce existed between the film industry and the Jaruzelski regime. Just as many of the original strictures of martial law were lifted and most political prisoners freed, so were restrictions on Polish cinema eased. Most of the exiled filmmakers returned, including Wajda. Serious films with a contemporary setting became possible once more—for example, Krzysztof Kieślowski's film of the grim year 1982, *No End* (*Bez końca*, 1985)—but in general, social criticism was out, and genre films were in.

Perhaps the most encouraging sign was the founding of a new experimental production collective, the Irzykowski Film Studio, which came forth as an important training ground for new talent, and there were indications everywhere that despite continuing repression and internal subversion, the Polish film industry was bouncing back from its post-1981 crisis well before the restoration of a Solidarity-controlled civilian government in August 1989.

Simultaneously, however, Poland's ongoing economic crisis threatened to destroy its cinema from within. By the late 1980s, the level of inflation in production costs had reached 100 percent, while government grants increased by only 40 percent; from thirty-seven features in 1987, annual production fell to twenty-eight films in 1989 and twenty-two in 1990. In August 1989, Solidarity replaced the Communists as Poland's ruling party in a free election, and the new government extended relief to

the film industry in October 1989 by ending the *zespóły* system and transforming the film units into independent production companies, owning for the first time everything they produced and controlling distribution and export rights. Andrzej Wajda denounced Polish cinema at the end of 1990 as "a desert." By 1992, however, Lech Wałęsa had become president of Poland, the economy had stabilized, and annual film production had risen once more to thirty-eight features.

Former Czechoslovakia

The Postwar Period

Unlike Poland, Czechoslovakia had a distinguished cinematic tradition long before World War II. One of the leading pioneers of camera technology, J. E. Purkyně (1787–1869), was from the Czech land of Bohemia. Commercial production began in Prague in 1908, six years ahead of Berlin, and the city became a major Continental film capital in the period just before World War I. When the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed in the aftermath of that conflict, the Czechs and the Slovaks—regionally separate but culturally and linguistically similar—united to form the joint state of Czechoslovakia.

By 1933, Prague (in the Czech region) had the most sophisticated production facilities in Europe, at the Barrandov studios. Between the wars, several Czech directors achieved international reputations: Karl Anton (1898–1979) for the first Czech sound film *Tonka of the Gallows* (*Tonka šibenice*, 1930); Gustav Machatý (1901–1963) for his sensational *Ecstasy* (*Extase*, 1932); and Martin Frič (1902–1968) for his Slovak folk epic *Jánošík* (1935).

During the Occupation, domestic production slumped from forty films in 1940 to nine in 1944, as the Nazis appropriated the Barrandov studios and greatly expanded their production capacity in order to make German-language films. Yet during the same period, certain Czech filmmakers were already formulating plans for the nationalization of the industry when the Nazis withdrew. On August 11, 1945, the Czech president, Eduard Beneš, signed a nationalization decree that established a new production system with three major components: (1) a specially equipped studio for the production of puppet and animation films, (2) the organization of collective production groups for live-action features, and (3) the foundation of a state film school—the Prague Film (and Television, after 1960) Faculty of the Academy of Dramatic Arts (FAMU). In 1947, a separate Slovak production system was organized, with its own documentary and feature studios in Bratislava. Czechoslovakia thus became the second country in Eastern Europe, after the Soviet Union, to totally and permanently nationalize its film industry.

Nationalization freed producers to concentrate on serious political themes, and the first postwar Czech films dealt with the historic struggle to create a communist state. Czech cinema in the early 1950s was one of doctrinaire socialist realism, similar to that of the other Warsaw Pact nations, and the Czech film industry was rigidly centralized. Perhaps the most important event of the period was the formation in 1952 of a close association between the directors Elmar Klos (1910–1993) and Ján Kadár (1918–1979), which would produce two of the greatest films of what came to be called the Czech New Wave, *The Shop on Main Street* and *Adrift*. Klos and Kadár also collaborated on some of the most interesting Czech films of the 1950s, culminating in the controversial *Three Wishes* (*Tři přání*, 1958), a veiled analysis of the mechanisms of social repression.

By the year of the film's release, the post-Stalinist thaw had given Czech filmmakers greater freedom to explore both contemporary and historical themes, and the industry had been decentralized into five semiautonomous production groups, according to the Polish model. Yet *Three Wishes* became the object of a neo-Stalinist attack on the industry at a conference at Banská Bystrica in 1959, and along with several other films, it was banned until 1963. This new and unexpected wave of repression caused directors to retreat to the perennially safe subject matter of the Nazi Occupation, but this time the Czech experience of the war was used as a vehicle for contemporary social comment.

Another haven from the neo-Stalinist assault on Czech film was formal experimentation, which the Slovak director Štefan Uher (1930–1993) employed when he made *Sunshine in a Net* (*Slnko v sieti*, 1962), identified by many historians as the first film of the Czech New Wave. Technically unconventional and highly stylized, *Sunshine in a Net* deals primarily with the inner lives of its characters; it was attacked by the first secretary of the Slovak Communist Party for exalting subjective vision over socialist realism. At about the

(right) Hedy Lamarr and Aribert Mog in *Ecstasy* (*Extase*; Gustav Machatý, 1932).



same time, a major reform of the Slovak Communist Party placed a liberal at its head, preparing the way for a brief period of democratization that followed.

The Czech New Wave

The official vindication of *Sunshine in a Net* helped clear the path for the Czech New Wave. So, too, did the extraordinary experimental films of Věra Chytilová (1929–2014), a former draftswoman and fashion model who attended FAMU, along with other future directors of the New Wave. Chytilová's medium-length graduation film, *Ceiling* (*Strop*), was distributed commercially with her second film, *A Bag of Fleas* (*Pytel blech*), in 1962, and they established her immediately as the chief formal innovator of the New Wave. Markedly influenced by French and American *cinéma vérité* techniques, both of these films were stories of young women seeking self-actualization in the closed world of Czech urban society. Chytilová's first feature, for which she also wrote the screenplay, was *Something Else/Something Different* (*O něčem jiném*, 1963), a *cinéma vérité* portrait of the lives of two quite different women, an Olympic gymnast and a frustrated housewife.

With *Daisies* (*Sedmikrásky*, 1966), Chytilová moved away from *cinéma vérité* into the realm of surrealist fantasy and produced one of the outstanding works of the Czech New Wave. The film concerns two bored and self-indulgent girls (the "daisies" of the title) who embark on an outrageous binge of destruction that ultimately destroys them. Openly anarchic and subversive, *Daisies* was banned until 1967, when it won considerable critical acclaim, both at home and abroad. Chytilová, however, was denied state funds to continue her filmmaking, and after 1970, she was forbidden by the government to make films altogether. The ban was lifted in 1975, and she stood for decades as the most influential formal innovator of the Czech New Wave.

Another New Wave formalist of note was Jaromil Jireš (1935–2001). In the Prague Spring of 1968, the brief period of democratization fostered by the Dubček regime, Jireš was able to produce a dark, ironic masterpiece, *The Joke* (*Žert*). Based on a contemporary novel by Milan Kundera, the film provides a savage indictment of the Stalinist system in the story of a postwar philosophy student who is unjustly expelled from school and sent to serve in one of the Czech army's notoriously brutal "black units" because he made a political joke.

The films of Chytilová and Jireš signaled the beginning of the Czech New Wave, or the "Czech Film



Ivana Karbanová and Jitka Cerhová in *Daisies* (*Sedmikrásky*; Věra Chytilová, 1966); sepia tint in the original print.



Paula Pritchett in *Adrift/A Longing Called Anada* (*Touha zvaná Anada*; Elmar Klos and Ján Kadár, 1971).

Miracle," as it has also been called. This movement was to have an impact on world cinema equivalent to that of Italian neorealism; it was political, as well as artistic, in that its ultimate goal was to make the Czech people collectively aware that they were participants in a system of oppression and incompetence that had brutalized them all. The success of this consciousness-raising was nearly total, and there is little doubt today that the Czech cinema of 1963–1968—similar to the Polish "cinema of moral anxiety" of 1976–1981—laid much of the groundwork for liberalization. It also brought the Czech film industry into a position of international prominence once again.

Though it was dominated by the youngest generation of FAMU-trained directors, the New Wave was a movement in which Czech filmmakers of all generations participated, precisely because it was a national political phenomenon. In 1968, veterans Klos and Kadár began work on their most important film, the Czech-American co-production *Adrift/A Longing Called Anada* (*Touha zvaná Anada*, 1971). *Adrift* is an elaborately conceived parable of a man cutting himself loose from all traditional ties to his family, his culture, and his religion. Paradoxically, this liberation takes the form of madness, and its vehicle is sexual obsession. Catalyzed by his wife's apparently terminal illness, a simple middle-aged fisherman is overwhelmingly attracted by the image of a beautiful young woman whom he may or may not have pulled from the waters of the Danube. Except for its beginning and end—which recount the same action from different points of view—the whole film seems to take place in the mind of its protagonist, as he stands on the brink of poisoning his sick wife and interrogates himself about the mental events that have led him to this pass. Its stylistic and structural complexity, which

extends to a brilliantly modulated score by František Černý, caused many American critics to dismiss *Adrift* as incomprehensible. Yet the film has the circular logic of a fantasy or a dream, and to try to read it as a conventional narrative is to misconceive its intentions.

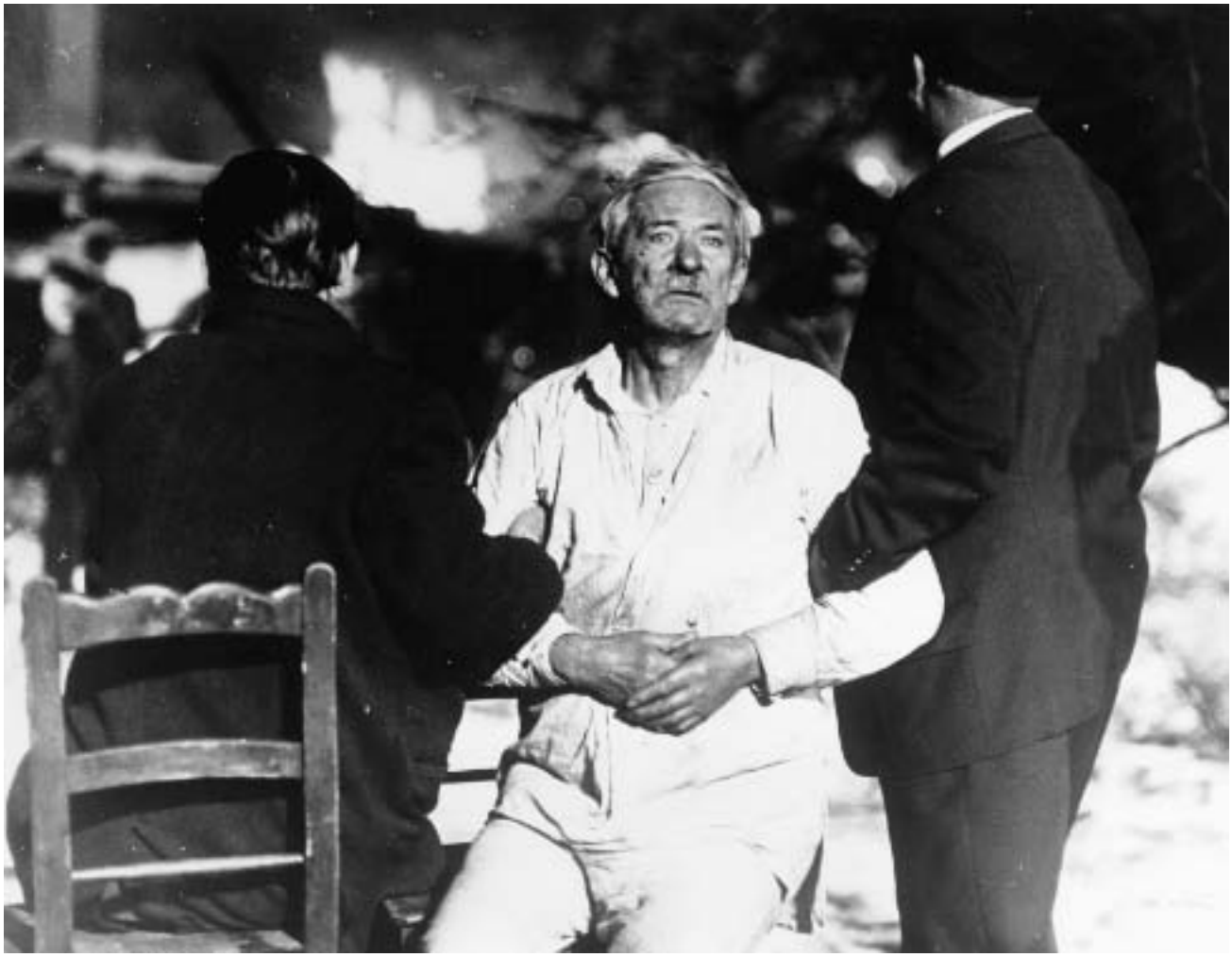
Vojtěch Jasný, the first director of importance to emerge from FAMU, made an important contribution to the New Wave with his wistfully lyrical *All My Countrymen* (*Všichni dobři rodáci*, 1968), a bittersweet paean to the inhabitants of a small Moravian village who had worked together with Jasný since the war to achieve the reform of their society, so recently and brutally crushed by the Soviet-led invasion.

Most characteristic of the younger directors of the Czech New Wave, and ultimately the most famous, was Milos Forman (b. 1932). Forman, who was orphaned by the Nazis during the Occupation, graduated from FAMU in 1955 as a scriptwriter before making his first feature, *Black Peter/Peter and Pavla* (*Černý Petr*, 1963). This ironic film about generational conflict, shot in *cinéma vérité* fashion with nonactors and a deliberately functional camera style, is generally considered to be one of the landmarks of the New Wave. The film, which won the Czech Film Critics' Prize, marked Forman's first association with cinematographer Miroslav Ondříček (1933–2015), with whom he collaborated on his next two films. Like *Black Peter*, these were subtle behavioral studies built on elaborated anecdotes rather than traditional plot structures, employing improvised dialogue, nonprofessional actors, and a "nonstudio" look (natural lighting, real locations, etc.).

The Loves of a Blonde/A Blonde in Love (*Lásky jedné plavovlásky*, 1965), which brought Forman to international attention, was the simple tale of a young factory girl who meets a touring piano player at a local dance and ends up going to bed with him. The film is a sharply observed comedy of everyday life, and its superb sense of timing recalls the American



Hana Brejchová in *The Loves of a Blonde/A Blonde in Love* (*Lásky jedné plavovlásky*; Milos Forman, 1965).



Frantisek Svet in *The Firemen's Ball* (*Hoří, má panenko*; Milos Forman, 1967).

screwball comedies of the 1930s. Yet *Loves of a Blonde* also contained an implicit criticism of the banality of modern Czech society, its bureaucratic incompetence and ideological rigidity, which did not pass unnoticed by the authorities.

The Firemen's Ball (*Hoří, má panenko*, 1967) went even further in this direction—so far that its release was temporarily blocked by President Novotný himself. The film is a satire on Czechoslovakia's most sensitive contemporary political debate: What should be the official attitude toward the Stalinist brutality of the 1950s (during the purges from 1949 to 1955, some 190,000 victims were executed or imprisoned) and toward those still in power who perpetrated it? This issue is presented in the form of a comedy about a small town's commemorative celebration for its dying fire chief. The ball is interrupted by a fire, and the firemen return to discover that all of the food, gifts, and prizes have been stolen by the guests. Some are caught, and a great argument ensues over how the culprits should be treated. At the same time, *The Firemen's Ball* is a slice-of-life comedy satirizing the stolidly heroic socialist-realist melodramas made in the Soviet bloc countries during the 1940s and the 1950s.

The Firemen's Ball opened on December 15, 1967, just two weeks before the political crisis that overthrew Novotný and brought the liberal Alexander Dubček to power. When Dubček himself was ousted following the Soviet-led invasion, Forman, like so many of his colleagues, was forced to leave the country. With Ondříček, he came to the United States, where he directed *Taking Off* (1971), a social comedy about contemporary American mores in the *cinéma vérité* style of his Czech films.

Although he stands today as a mainstream commercial talent in the West, Forman has never deserted the concrete visual poetry of his early work. In his concern for the texture of the everyday, Forman seems to have

been influenced by Italian neorealism and also by British Free Cinema and social realism as practiced by Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz. His nearly perfect sense of comic timing has been attributed to the influences of Chaplin, Keaton, and Hawks. Yet there is something uniquely Czech in the experiential quality of his shooting and lighting and in the black humor of his satire.

Forman's influence on his peers in Czechoslovak cinema was great. His co-scenarists Ivan Passer (*Intimate Lighting* [*Intime osvetleni,* 1965]) and Jaroslav Papousek (*The Most Beautiful Age* [*Nejkrasnejsi vek,* 1968]) both made plotless, anecdotal films in the manner of Forman during the New Wave, but the most important figure to adopt Forman's antiheroic *cinéma vérité* style was Jiří Menzel (b. 1938), although all of his films of the 1960s were based on literary sources. Menzel's first feature, *Closely Watched Trains* (*Ostře sledované vlaky*, 1966), brought him international fame and became the second Czech film to win an American Academy Award (as Best Foreign Film of 1966). The film is an elliptical, Formanesque study of human attitudes and behavior set in a railway town during the Occupation. An awkward youth apprentices himself to the village railroad-station guard, whose sexual exploits he much admires. After failing miserably in his first sexual encounter, the young man makes a suicide attempt. He finally succeeds at sex with a beautiful Resistance fighter and, in a dramatic assertion of virility, blows up a Nazi ammunition train, during which act he is killed by a German guard's machine gun. *Closely Watched Trains* is both comic and deadly serious, often simultaneously, and in this regard it epitomizes an essential characteristic of Czech New Wave cinema—its ironic and often detached intermixing of dichotomous emotional responses. Menzel's other notable New Wave film is *Capricious Summer* (*Rozmarné léto*, 1967), a humorous but sometimes



Closely Watched Trains (*Ostře sledované vlaky*; Jiří Menzel, 1966).

dark fable about the sexual misadventures of three middle-aged friends in a small fishing village.

The two most politically controversial and morally committed directors of the Czech New Wave were Evald Schorm (1931–1989) and Jan Němec (b. 1936). Schorm, who is often called "the conscience of the New Wave," graduated from FAMU in 1962 and made eight documentary shorts before directing his first feature, *Everyday Courage/Courage for Every Day* (*Každý den odvadhu*) in 1964. In it, he eschewed both the formal experiments of Chytilová and Jireš and the *cinéma vérité* techniques of Forman, Passer, and Menzel to make a traditional dramatic film of uncompromisingly serious intent. *Everyday Courage* is the story of an idealistic Communist organizer who gradually comes to recognize that his ideals are wrong and that they have caused much human misery. The official response to this allegory of de-Stalinization was violent condemnation. When *Everyday Courage* won the Czech Film Critics' Prize in 1965, the government refused to let Schorm accept it and attempted to sabotage the film's distribution.

International outcry finally forced official acceptance of *Everyday Courage*, but Schorm's next feature, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (*Návrat ztraceného syna*, 1966), was banned outright for several months. This film, considered to be Schorm's masterpiece, is a parable of the fate of the individual in an authoritarian society. Its protagonist, Jan, is confined to a mental institution after a suicide attempt. Jan's failure to "adjust" to the existing social structure stems from his unwillingness to compromise his personal integrity, and he is hunted down by a mob that mistakes him for a rapist. Schorm's third film of contemporary social criticism, *Saddled with Five Girls* (*Pět holek na krku*, 1967), forms a kind of trilogy with *Everyday Courage* and *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. Less pessimistic than his earlier work, *Saddled* is a film of youthful love and alienation that juxtaposes its narrative with scenes from a Webern opera.



The Party and the Guests/A Report on the Party and the Guests (*O slavnosti a hostech*; Jan Němec, 1966).

Like Schorm, Jan Němec is an ethically committed filmmaker concerned with the survival of individual integrity in a repressive, regimented society. Yet unlike Schorm, he experimented boldly with form and was on the cutting edge of the New Wave since his student days. His first feature, *Diamonds of the Night* (*Démanty noci*, 1964), was adapted by Němec and Arnošt Lustig from a novel by Lustig about two young Jews who escape from a Nazi death march. Němec turned the narrative into a nightmarish representation of the mental anguish of human beings under extreme physical and psychological stress. Documentary-like footage of the four-day hunt for the boys is intercut with images from their dreams, fantasies, and hallucinations. The film was a great domestic critical success and won several international awards.

Němec's next film began a brief but fruitful collaboration with the designer Ester Krumbachová and brought the wrath of officialdom down on the heads of both. *The Party and the Guests/A Report on the Party and the Guests* (*O slavnosti a hostech*, 1966) was a stylized, Kafkaesque allegory about the mechanisms of repression in Czech society and the most politically venomous film of the New Wave. This sinister parable of social conformity and political dissent was brilliantly designed by Krumbachová to achieve just the proper sense of strange beauty intermixed with menace. Many of the scenes were modeled on contemporary Czech paintings and media images, giving the film a rich subtext of visual allusion. Most of the roles were played by friends of the filmmaker's, so at yet another level of allusion the film stands as a collective political manifesto by Prague's artists and intellectuals.

The film was banned for two full years and became the object of violent invective. Together with Chytilová's *Daisies*, it was used as an excuse for a denunciation of the entire New Wave in the Czechoslovak National Assembly in May 1967. When Dubček assumed power in January 1968, *The Party and the Guests* was finally released domestically, and that spring it was sent to Cannes as the official Czech entry. Němec was at work with Josef Škvorecký on a documentary about Prague when Soviet tanks entered the city on August 20–21. This film became *Oratorio for Prague* (1968), a melancholy account of the invasion, which was smuggled out of Czechoslovakia for screening in the West.

"Banned Forever"

The Czech film miracle came to an abrupt end in 1968 with the Soviet-led invasion and the subsequent occupation of the country by Warsaw Pact troops. The liberalization of Czechoslovakia—the attempt to create a "socialism with a human face"—had threatened Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe, and so it was suppressed by force. Films in production were halted. Many already in release were withdrawn by party censors and banned. The managing directors of both the Barrandov studios and the Koliba studios in Bratislava were fired, and the director of the state distribution organization, Czechoslovak Film, was arrested and imprisoned for "antisocialist activities." The five autonomous production groups, together with the Union of Czechoslovak Film and Television Artists (FITES), were dissolved, and every Czech filmmaker discussed in this chapter, except Jireš and Uher, was blacklisted and forbidden to work in the film industry indefinitely.

By 1973, virtually every important film of the previous decade lay buried in a vault in the cellar of the Barrandov studios, and four of these had been labeled "banned forever." It was as if the New Wave and everything it had accomplished had never existed. What might have happened had the New Wave cinema been allowed to grow and prosper—and what that growth might have meant for the development of international cinema—is impossible to say. Surely, its significance would have been great. Yet instead, "normalization" left a huge vacuum that the Czech film industry has been unable to fill ever since.

In 1989, democracy was reborn in Czechoslovakia in the wake of the Velvet Revolution of November 17–December 10—massive but mainly bloodless street demonstrations leading to the fall of the Communist government and, in June 1990, to the first free elections in forty-four years. In that year, dissident playwright Vaclav Havel was swept into office as president of the Czechoslovak Republic, and twenty years of state censorship were reversed at the twenty-seventh Karlovy Vary Film Festival, July 7–19, when twenty-two formerly banned features and eleven shorts were shown to world acclaim. Seven of the features, made between the fall of 1968 and the end of 1969, had never been domestically released.

At the end of 1990 the Central Management of Czechoslovak Film, which had controlled all film production and distribution in the nation, was disbanded. A number of independent, joint-stock film companies (e.g., Bonton, Microfilm, and Cinepont) were formed immediately with foreign capital, but none of the Czech or Slovak features produced that year could even amortize their costs because domestic audiences favored American imports and film attendance generally declined. In 1991, the Barrandov studios,



Boseslav Polivka in *Divided We Fall* (*Musíme si pomáhat*; Jan Hrebejk, 2000).

still government-owned, reduced its workforce by half and managed to complete only sixteen features, compared with an average of twenty-five during the Communist era. With state production grants running at 30 percent of budget or less, some began to question whether the Czechoslovak film industry could survive in the context of its small (15.6 million) and increasingly competitive domestic market. Yet despite the shock to the system administered by its rapid conversion to capitalism, the Czechoslovak film industry faced an artistically promising, if financially uncertain, future.

In the summer of 1992, however, Czechs and Slovaks voted in national elections to abandon the federal state and to form separate, independent republics. The Velvet Revolution, it was said, had led to a "velvet divorce." Havel resigned as president (he remained president of the new Czech Republic), and on December 31, 1992, the country that had created the Czechoslovak film miracle officially ceased to exist. Since that time, the Czech and Slovak cinemas have gone their separate ways. The Czech industry has remained in a fairly healthy state, producing around twenty films annually, but Slovakia has made only a handful each year, part of which is accountable to its small size (5.4 million people).

The Czechs, conversely, number 10.2 million and have experienced a number of international successes—for example, Jan Svěrák's *Kolya* (*Kolja,* 1996), which won many festival prizes and an Oscar for Best Foreign Film; and Jan Hrebejk's *Divided We Fall* (*Musíme si pomáhat*, 2000), which was an Academy Award nominee as well. Furthermore, veterans of the film miracle have continued to produce new work. In general, however, Czech films only rarely return their costs through theatrical distribution; as in other parts of Europe, state-supported national television (Czech TV) co-produces most Czech features. in exchange for broadcast rights.

Whatever their separate fates, the Czech Republic and Slovakia share one of the richest and oldest film cultures in the world. It can never be forgotten that during the Prague Spring, a country with a population of fewer than 16 million, inhabiting a land mass no larger than the state of Tennessee, was able to produce more than three hundred films that had a radical impact on its own sociopolitical structure and simultaneously changed the shape of international cinema.

Hungary

Three Revolutions

Like Czechoslovakia, Hungary has had a long and distinguished cinematic tradition. The Hungarians, in fact, seem to have identified film as an art form before any other nationality in the world, including the French. From the beginning, they emphasized the literary and intellectual aspects of film, and most films were adapted from classical Hungarian novels and plays. For this reason, famous authors and actors from the legitimate stage had none of the qualms about working in film that afflicted their counterparts in the West.

In 1912, the radical writer Sándor Korda (who later worked in Britain as the producer-director Alexander Korda) founded *Pesti mozi* ("Pest Cinema"), the first Hungarian film journal, and by 1920, it had been joined by sixteen others. A strong tradition of advanced film theory was founded in the 1910s by philosophers Jenö Török and Cecil Bognár and passed on to Béla Balázs (1884–1949), whose *Der Film—Werden und Wesen einer neuen Kunst* (*Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art*) became greatly influential. As in France, film attracted the avant-garde—for example, between 1923 and 1928, painter László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946) conducted numerous experiments with film's ability to transform space and light. Hungary also had the first nationalized film industry in history. Béla Kun's socialist revolution of March 1919 declared Hungary a "Red Republic of Councils," and the cinema was nationalized in April of that year—four months before Lenin nationalized the Soviet industry. This adventure lasted only until the rightest counterrevolution of Admiral Miklós Horthy, who installed himself as regent in August, but thirty-one films were produced in the interim.

Hungary's first important director was Mihály Kertész (1888–1962), who studied filmmaking at Denmark's Nordisk studios, directed a number of films in Germany in the 1920s, and settled in the United States, where he worked for Warner Bros. as Michael Curtiz. Other important figures were Pál Fejös (1898–1963) and Endre Tóth (1912–2002; also known as André De Toth), both of whom ultimately emigrated to America. Fejös returned to Hungary in 1931 to make his internationally celebrated *Spring Shower* (*Tavazsi zápor*, 1932).

In 1920, the Horthy regime restored film production to the private sector, and during the 1920s and the 1930s, the Hungarian industry became commercialized along American lines. Most films of the period were made on an assembly-line basis in imitation of Hollywood, and after the conversion to sound in 1930, musicals became extremely popular. Serious films appeared in the work of Fejös and in the Austrian director George Hoellering's *Hortobágy* (1935), a starkly realistic account of contemporary peasant life shot on location on the *puszta*, the great Hungarian plain.

When World War II broke out, the Horthy government, which was allied with the Germans, took control of the industry through the National Film Committee and permitted it to produce only conformist entertainment and propaganda films. A notable exception was István Szőts's (1912–1998) anticapitalist *People on the Alps* (*Emberek a havason*, 1942), shot on location in the mountains of Transylvania, which won a prize at Venice in the year of its release and was hailed by the Italian journal *Cinema* as a model for neorealism. Unsure of the country's stability, the Nazis seized Hungary in March of 1944, deposed Horthy, and set up their own government. The Soviet Union invaded in late 1944, and Hungary concluded an armistice with the Allies in January 1945.

Almost immediately, the Academy for Dramatic and Cinematographic Art was founded, and hundreds of Soviet and American films were shown in Hungary for the first time. The most significant Hungarian film of this period was the privately produced *Somewhere in Europe* (*Valahol Európában*, 1947), a humanitarian fantasy about the reclamation of war orphans, written by Béla Balázs and directed by Géza von Radványi (1907–1986). When a Communist government came to power early in 1948, the Hungarian film industry was nationalized for the second time. The first state-subsidized films were quite promising, but the political climate deteriorated rapidly under Stalinism, and the period 1949–1953 was one of stolid socialist realism.

The death of Stalin in 1953 and the subsequent replacement of Mátyás Rákosi as the Hungarian premier by Imre Nagy marked the beginning of the nation's New Course, a brief era of liberalization. This period was one of high achievement for Hungarian cinema. It witnessed the emergence of a new generation of directors. Their films expressed the increasingly liberal sentiments of the Hungarian workers and their yearning for a true social democracy. On October 23, 1956, this yearning began to manifest itself in demonstrations, street fighting, and finally, armed violence in Budapest.

As revolution spread swiftly throughout Hungary, workers' councils took control of most government



Somewhere in Europe (*Valahol Európában*; Géza von Radványi, 1947).

functions, and on November 1, Nagy declared his intention to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact. Three days later, the Soviet Union intervened—as it would do in Czechoslovakia in 1968, but with considerably less brutality—with 200,000 troops and 3,000 tanks under air cover. More than 25,000 Hungarian citizens died in the systematic tank bombardment of cities and industrial centers. Imre Nagy and about 2,000 of his supporters were arrested and ultimately executed. Another 10,000 people were deported to Soviet labor camps (an undetermined number were imprisoned for years without trial) and 200,000 fled into exile. The revolution was crushed, but the moderate János Kádár (no relation to filmmaker Ján Kadár) was installed as premier. He gradually embarked on a realistic course of liberalization and economic growth that left Hungary substantially freer and more stable financially than any of its Warsaw Pact neighbors.

The effect of the revolt—branded in party dogma as a "counterrevolution" until 1989—on Hungarian cinema was to arrest its development. The films of 1954–1956 had been notable primarily for their content, rather than for the kind of formal innovations that liberalization would produce in Poland and Czechoslovakia. In the matter of style and structure, Hungarian film was still essentially realist (or, at most, neorealist) when the revolution was put down. Afterward, it could evolve in neither form nor content until Kádár's steady process of liberalization had been realized. The films of 1957–1961, therefore, were unremarkable.

Yet between 1958 and 1961, the experimental Béla Balázs Studio was founded and put on a sound financial basis to give graduates of the state-operated Academy for Dramatic and Cinematographic Art in Budapest an opportunity to make their first films. In 1962, Kádár

unexpectedly declared a general amnesty, and the stage was set for a major resurgence of Hungarian cinema. The two figures of signal importance to this renaissance were András Kovács and Miklós Jancsó.

András Kovács

András Kovács (b. 1925) attended the Budapest Academy and made several features before undertaking a two-year period of study in Paris. There, Kovács fell under the influence of *cinéma vérité*, whose techniques he employed in *Difficult People* (*Nehéz emberek*, 1964) on his return to Hungary. This film examines the true cases of five Hungarian inventors whose work had been opposed or ignored through bureaucratic stupidity. *Difficult People* sparked a debate throughout the country, because it was the first time since 1955 that contemporary reality had been so directly confronted on the screen.

Kovács's next film, *Cold Days* (*Hideg napok*, 1966), was a visually engaging account of the massacre of some three thousand Jews and Serbs in the town of Novi Sad by Hungarian troops in January 1942. The event is narrated in flashback by four participants who are in prison awaiting trial for the atrocity. This film, too, provoked debate—this time about the collective nature of responsibility in both the national present and the national past. *Cold Days* appeared at several international festivals and attracted world attention to the new Hungarian cinema. In *Walls* (*Falak*, 1968) and *Relay Race* (*Staféta*, 1970), Kovács continued to probe the contradictions of contemporary Hungarian society with a degree of artistic freedom unprecedented in any other country in Eastern Europe.

Blindfold (*Bekötött szemmel*, 1974) is close to *Cold Days* in its sober, black-and-white reconstruction of an actual incident from World War II—that of a priest brought before a military tribunal for having caused the "miracle" that saved a condemned soldier from execution; while *Labyrinth* (*Labirintus*, 1976) follows



Cold Days (*Hideg napok*; András Kovács, 1966).

Truffaut, Wajda, and Fellini in creating a self-reflexive film about the process of filmmaking itself.

Kovács returned to politics to make his first film in color, *The Stud Farm* (*Ménesgazda*, 1978), a tale of political terror set during the first nervous months of the new Stalinist regime. Later Kovács films include *The Red Countess* (*A vörös grófnö*, 1985), a richly mounted two-part biography of Count Mihály Károlyi and his wife, who were major political figures at the time of World War I and the socialist revolution of 1919; and *Rear Guard* (*Valahol Magyarországon*, 1987), a documentary-style drama about grass-roots party politics.

Miklós Jancsó

The first major film of Miklós Jancsó (1921–2014), *Cantata* (*Oldás és kötés*, 1962), is also considered to be the first film of the Hungarian New Wave. Jancsó had studied law, ethnography, and art history before he entered the Budapest Academy, from which he graduated in 1950. For eight years, he made newsreels and documentaries that were fairly conventional in both form and content, as was his first feature, *The Bells Have Gone to Rome* (*A harangok Rómába mentek*, 1958). Yet *Cantata*, written by his perennial collaborator, Gyula Hernádi, and shot in eleven days, revealed a striking talent for visual composition and psychological analysis. Photographed in the neutralized style of Antonioni, it concerns a young physician educated during the Stalin era, who has risen to a favorable position within the socialist hierarchy and effectively isolated himself from the larger realities of Hungarian society. Returning after many years to the village of his birth, he is forced to confront his peasant origins in the person of his aged father and ultimately comes to realize his moral complicity in a system that, while offering him personal advancement, has ruined the lives of many others.

It was *My Way Home* (*Így jöttem*, 1964), however, that announced the style for which Jancsó would become famous—one based on extended long takes sustained by



The Round-Up/The Hopeless Ones (*Szegénylegények*; Miklós Jancsó, 1965).



Red Psalm (*Még kér a nép*; Miklós Jancsó, 1972).

rhythmic tracking movements of the camera and optical traveling through the zoom lens. The film is about a sixteen-year-old Hungarian conscript who has deserted the army and is attempting to make his way home across the western frontier during the last chaotic days of World War II. His life is threatened successively by Hungarian partisans, renegade Cossacks, the retreating Hungarian Fascists, and the advancing Red Army. He is finally captured by the latter and assigned to help a badly wounded Soviet soldier of about his own age tend some cows. Mutually distrustful at first, the two gradually become friends, and when the Russian dies of his wounds, the Hungarian sets off homeward again in his uniform, across the same landscape of murderously contending factions as before. *My Way Home* offers a pessimistic view of a hostile universe in a structure of great formal beauty—traits strikingly present in Jancsó's next film.

The Round-Up/The Hopeless Ones (*Szegénylegények*, 1965), which brought Jancsó to international prominence when it was shown at Cannes in 1966, is a chilling account of a historical incident that occurred in 1868 and the first of many Jancsó films about great events from the Hungarian past. Under the commission of Count Gedeon Ráday, the political police of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy attempt to unmask Sándor Rózsa, the chief of a rebel army group during the 1848 Revolution, which was led by Lájos Kossuth. The police round up several hundred peasants, herdsmen, and suspected outlaws, putting them in a prison stockade on the great Hungarian plain (*puszta*), where they employ sophisticated modern means of interrogation, torture, and political terror to force the inmates into mutual betrayal.

The Round-Up introduced many of Jancsó's mature personal symbols and stylistic obsessions: the use of nudity to signify humiliation; the totally impersonal depiction of cruelty and violence; the menacing image of incessantly circling horsemen on the empty spaces of the plain; the balletic choreography of the camera and groups of actors within the frame; the replacement of characterization through dialogue with bureaucratic jargon, slogans, and songs; and a densely interwoven music track, combining folk and classical melodies with incidental sound. The film also

demonstrated that Jancsó was an absolute master of the new aesthetics, whose cinematic structures are dependent on widescreen composition, the long take, and the zoom lens.

Jancsó continued his bold stylistic experiments in a series of films whose symbolic subject was Hungary's past but whose real theme was Hungary's present and future. All were characterized by the abstract, mythographic, and sometimes theatrical quality visible in *The Round-Up*, but they tended to extend these modes to the very limits of coherence. *The Red and the White* (*Csillagosok, katonák*, 1967) was concerned with Hungarians fighting in the Red Army in 1918 during the civil war in Russia. It employed sustained lateral tracking and widescreen composition brilliantly to visualize the constantly shifting balance of power between two great armies massed against each other in empty space.

With *Red Psalm* (*Még kér a nép*, 1972), Jancsó produced his masterpiece. Composed of fewer than thirty shots, this film is a stunning symbolic analysis of the revolutionary process, its psychological and social preconditions, and its ultimate, necessary failure. For eighty minutes, camera and lens move incessantly, circling and encircling the choric participants in the drama—historically, an abortive agrarian socialist rebellion in the late nineteenth century. Music, sound, color, and focus, virtually every element in the film, work in concert to make *Red Psalm* a film of nearly perfect formal beauty and great ideological power. Jancsó won the Palme d'Or at Cannes for its direction in 1972.

Jancsó's twelve-shot *Elektreia* (*Szerelmem, Elektra*, 1974) extended his abstractionist vision into the realm of Greek myth, but not without his characteristic political subtext: the film is adapted from a play by László Gyurkó that uses the Electra legend as an allegory of the Stalinist period to explore the morality of making reprisals against a tyrant's henchmen after his death.

After *Elektreia*, Jancsó returned to his national heritage and began work on an ambitious trilogy intended to represent Hungarian history from the turn of the century through World War II. Only two parts were completed: *Hungarian Rhapsody* (*Magyar rapszódia*, 1979) and *Allegro Barbaro* (1979), which were shown as *Hungarian Rhapsody, Parts I and II* at Cannes in 1979, when Jancsó was awarded the Special Jury Prize for the entire body of his work.

It has often been said of Jancsó that all of his films seem to be one and the same. Yet this criticism against consistency of vision might apply equally to Bergman, Antonioni, Ozu, and many other masters of contemporary cinema. Jancsó's mastery of widescreen composition and the extended long take alone would assure him a permanent place in the history of film, but Jancsó always used this technical prowess to make films of hallucinatory beauty, profound feeling, and great intellectual depth. And it is this, above all else, that made him one of the great artists of modern cinema, as well as Hungary's greatest national film poet.

Gaál, Szabó, and Mészáros

Three other Hungarian filmmakers who have achieved international distinction within the last two decades are István Gaál (1933–2007), István Szabó (b. 1938), and Márta Mészáros (b. 1931). Gaál graduated from the Academy for Dramatic and Cinematographic Art in 1959 and studied for two years on an Italian State Scholarship at the Centro Sperimentale in Rome. *The Falcons* (*Magasiskola*, 1970), widely regarded as Gaál's masterpiece, is set on the Great Plain in a falconry camp that becomes a paradigm for Hungarian Fascism and its retreat into the feudal past. This brilliant study of the authoritarian mentality, which took a prize at Cannes, creates a kind of concrete poetry in its Jancsó-like camera movement, relentlessly dynamic editing, and stunning manipulations of color and sound.

István Szabó's first feature, *The Age of Daydreaming* (*Álmodozások kora*, 1964), follows the fortunes of five newly graduated engineers as they set out to conquer the world in the optimistic 1960s, and it bears the marked influence of the French New Wave, especially Truffaut, to whom it contains several explicit *hommages*. *Father* (*Apa*, 1966), a more tightly constructed and ambitious film, concerns a young man's attempts to come to terms with his dead father's reputation as a partisan hero of World War II, in the context of his own involvement with the 1956 revolution. In its concern with the impingement of the past on the present and the future, *Father* is closer in theme to Resnais than to Truffaut.

Szabó's next four films actually employ Resnais's editing techniques of flashbacks cued by association, the repetition of significant scenes with slight variations, and the steady integration of past and present through montage: *Love Film* (*Szerelmesfilm*, 1970), *25 Fireman's Street* (*Tüzoltó utca 25*, 1973), *Budapest Tales* (*Budapesti mesék*, 1976), and *Confidence* (*Bizalom*, 1979) all evoke Hungarian history from the end of World War II though the failed revolution of 1956.



Klaus Maria Brandauer in *Mephisto* (István Szabó, 1981).

With the Hungarian–West German co-production *Mephisto* (1981), Szabó achieved his first great international success and reached a watershed in his career. This dark film chronicles the Machiavellian climb to fame of the provincial actor Hendrik Höfgen (Klaus Maria Brandauer) during the Nazi era. From playing with a left-wing theater troupe in Hamburg in 1929, he rises to the directorship of Berlin's National Theater by 1936 through a series of personal betrayals and artistic compromises that make him a favorite of the Nazi elite. *Mephisto* won many international awards, including the Cannes Jury Prize for Best Screenplay, the International Film Press Federation (FIPRESCI) Prize for Best Picture, and the American Academy Award for Best Foreign Film (all in 1982).

Szabó's next endeavor, the Hungarian–West German–Austrian co-production *Colonel Redl* (*Redl Ezredes/Oberst Redl*, 1985), is based on the life of Alfred Redl, who was head of the Austro-Hungarian political police near the outbreak of World War I. *Hanussen* (1988) is also based on a real character, in this case, a psychic who briefly became the darling of the National Socialists between the wars and was later murdered by them.

Unlike Jancsó, who often improvised while on location from a basic outline of dialogue and action, Szabó works from a meticulously detailed—and almost always original—shooting script of his own device. This scrupulous pre-planning has meant that each of his films has engaged Szabó for at least two years, but once in production, he seems capable of adapting to whatever circumstances are dictated by the shoot. Recent Szabó films include *Sunshine* (1999), a kaleidoscopic epic of twentieth-century Hungarian history; *Taking Sides* (2001), concerning the denazification proceedings against German orchestra conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler; and *Being Julia* (2004), a comedy-drama about the midlife crisis of popular British stage actress Julia Lambert set in 1938.

Márta Mészáros was born in Budapest in 1931 but grew up in the Soviet Union, where her leftist



Diary for My Loves (*Napló szerelmeimnek*; Márta Mészáros, 1987).

father, the noted sculptor László Mészáros, was forced to emigrate in 1936. Her first feature, *The Girl* (*Eltávozott nap*, 1968), in which a young woman raised in a state orphanage searches for her biological parents, announced both the style and the theme of her later features—a documentary-like flatness of presentation, combined with a deep and abiding concern for the situation of women and children within contemporary Hungarian society. Most of Mészáros's films involve an independent woman who finds herself faced with making an important decision on her own, and they tend to be both intimate and open-ended. In *Binding Sentiments* (*A "holdudvar,"* 1969), for example, an alcoholic mother and her son's fiancée play a cat-and-mouse game at a hillside villa overlooking Lake Balaton. Another typical Mészáros film is *Riddance/Free Breath* (*Szabad lélegzet*, 1973), which focuses on the struggles of a factory girl and her student lover to maintain their relationship against the prejudicial demands of his parents. *Adoption* (*Örökbefogadás*, 1975), winner of the Grand Prix at Berlin, is widely regarded as Mészáros's most aesthetically and psychologically satisfying feature to date. It concerns a middle-aged woman who wants to have a child by her unwilling married lover.

In *Nine Months* (*Kilenc hónap*, 1976), a factory woman becomes pregnant by a company engineer but leaves him to bear the child alone. *Two of Them* (*Ők ketten*, 1977) deals with a cross-generational relationship similar to that of *Adoption*. Other notable Mészáros films include her triptych autobiography: *Diary for My Children* (*Napló gyermekeimnek*, 1984) is a small-scale but intensely personal work about a young girl's coming of age during the grimmest years of Stalinism, 1947–1953, which won the Special Jury Prize at Cannes. Its sequel, *Diary for My Loves* (*Napló szerelmeimnek*, 1987), continues her story from 1949 through the fateful year of 1956. Mészáros completed her Diary trilogy in 1990 with *Diary for My Father and Mother* (*Napló apámnak, anyámnak*), a complex representation of the 1956 uprising and the terror that followed. All of Mészáros's films since 1982 have been photographed by her former stepson Miklós "Nyika" Jancsó Jr. (she was married to Miklós Jancsó from 1960 to 1973). Mészáros bears witness to Hungarian society from a consciously female perspective to confront issues usually ignored by Eastern European (and most other) cinema: the subjugation of women in a patriarchal system, the dissolution of traditional family structures, and the plight of children raised without parental affection or control.

Other Hungarian Directors

Other Hungarian directors who have recently attracted world attention are Sándor Sára (b. 1933), Pál Gábor (1932–1987), Ferenc Kósa (b. 1937), Zsolt Kézdi-Kovács (1936–2014), and István Dárday (b. 1940). Sára's successful debut was *The Upthrown Stone* (*Feldobott kő*, 1968), which deals with the disillusionment of an idealistic intellectual under the dictatorial Rákosi government in the early 1950s; in the end, we learn that he has actually made the film we are watching in order to expose that regime's brutality. In his dark satire *Pheasant Tomorrow* (*Holnap lesz fácán*, 1974) a contemporary holiday camp for young people becomes a microcosm of totalitarian society, as a middle-aged "Leader" and his friends take control of the establishment and set up a miniature authoritarian state. *Eighty Hussars* (*80 Huszár*, 1978) makes a parable of a true episode from the 1848 revolution: a squadron of hussars deserts the Imperial Army for home to fight with the rebels, but only a handful of the men make it back, rendering their heroic gesture futile.

The features of Pál Gábor—*Horizon* (*Horizont*, 1970), for example—deal with the phenomenon of industrial alienation in a manner similar to that of British New Cinema, a fact Gábor acknowledges by having his protagonist's antiestablishment rebellion sparked by watching Lindsay Anderson's *If* . . . (1968) several times. Gábor's most successful and widely distributed feature to date is *Angi Vera* (1978), set in 1948 as the Stalinists were asserting their control over the party machinery. The film's youthful heroine, Vera Angi, touchingly portrayed by Veronika Papp, shows early "political consciousness" (that is, Communist leanings) by denouncing her former boss and is sent to a three-month training camp for aspiring party leaders. There, she has an affair with her married teacher István, which she later confesses out of political expediency, ruining him but advancing herself a step further up the party ladder. Written by Gábor and subtly photographed by the brilliant Lajos Koltai, *Angi Vera* is a deeply felt film: Vera's motivations are always ambiguous, at the very least, and her betrayal of István out of party loyalty has a tragic sincerity about it and a



Vera Pap and Tamás Dunai in *Angi Vera* (Pál Gábor, 1978).

resonance for her future life that she can only vaguely understand.

Ferenc Kósa graduated from the Budapest Academy in 1963 and completed his first feature in 1965, but its release was delayed for political reasons until 1967, when it was justly awarded the Grand Prix at Cannes. The result of years of documentary research, *Ten Thousand Suns* (*Tízezer nap*) traces the life of the peasant-born communist István Széles in flashback through all of the social changes that have overtaken Hungary in the thirty years from his birth through the 1956 revolution. (The title refers both to the ten thousand days of its time frame and to István's vision of a new Utopia, when he would see "ten thousand suns" bursting into flames above the sea.) In effect, the film is a complex meditation on whether the benefits brought to Hungary by Communism (industrialization, urbanization, positive growth) can ever justify the brutal means used to achieve them. Yet it is also a richly poetic visual experience that has been compared to the work of Dovzhenko in its lyricism and of Eisenstein in its treatment of mass movement on the screen.

Beyond Time (*Nincs idö*, 1972) was similarly controversial (though not suppressed). Set in a Hungarian prison in 1929, this intentionally baroque film charts the attempts of a weak but well-meaning governor to prevent a hunger strike among political prisoners, mainly Communists; he fails in the end, and his job is turned over to the ruthless chief warden, a personification of the authoritarian mentality. In *Snowfall* (*Hószakadás*, 1974), a young soldier sets out across Transylvania with his peasant grandmother in search of his parents, who disappeared in the closing days of World War II. Kósa's two-part historical drama *The Other Person* (*A másik ember*, 1988) provided yet another impressive display of visual imagination and ideological praxis in two stories of a father's and a son's separate encounters with Fascism—the father's as a soldier during World War II and the son's as a student insurgent during the 1956 revolution, with each part filmed magnificently in a style appropriate to its theme.

Zsolt Kézdi-Kovács graduated from the Budapest Academy and spent several years as an assistant to Jancsó. Yet it was the extraordinarily beautiful and lushly photographed *Romanticism* (*Romantika*, 1972) that attracted international attention to his work. Set during the Enlightenment, this film concerns a young Hungarian nobleman who rejects his father's "civilized" material values for the philosophical ideal of the noble savage and ends as a kind of wild child, roaming the forests first with a band of local outlaws and finally with a pack of stags. Shot as a series of sustained long takes with zoom and telescopic lenses, *Romanticism* bears the marked influence of Jancsó and has the visually rhapsodic quality of his greatest work.



Lili Monori and Miklós B. Székely in *Forbidden Relations* (*Visszaesök*; Zsolt Kézdi-Kovács, 1983).

Equally significant is *Forbidden Relations* (*Visszaesök*, 1983). Based on the transcripts of a true case, the film gives a sensitive account of an incestuous affair that develops between a sister and her half brother in a small rural village. More recently, Kézdi-Kovács directed *After All* (*És mégis*, 1991), a complex collage of newsreel footage and contemporary narrative examining the past fifty years of Hungarian history.

In 1974, another 1961 Academy graduate, István Dárday, pioneered a new genre mixing documentary and fiction in *Holiday in Britain* (*Jutalomutazás*). This satire concerns a peasant boy who wins a musical competition to travel with a government-sponsored youth group to Britain. His mother refuses to let him go, fearing that he will be "changed" by the experience (much as Hungarian rural life has been changed by collectivization), which puts her into direct conflict with the socialist bureaucracy. Shot on location with nonactors improvising from their own real-life roles, *Holiday* is a very funny film but also a markedly serious one in delineating the conflict between a centuries-old peasant mentality and the attitudes of a modern bureaucratic state.

Inspired by Dárday's success, the Béla Balázs Studio conducted a yearlong series of experiments on new ways of integrating the forms of documentary and feature films. The result was the genre of the "film-novel" (literally, *filmregény*, also known as "docudrama," "fiction-documentary," and "documentary play"), a kind of sociographic documentary as epitomized by Dárday's *Film Novel—Three Sisters* (*Filmregény—három nővér*, 1977). This four-and-one-half-hour feature follows the lives of three sisters between the ages of twenty and thirty during a period of two years in contemporary Budapest to provide an authentic portrait of Hungarian society. Nonactors were cast in roles corresponding to those they play in real life and were then directed to flesh out fictional personalities according to a tightly constructed narrative line (written by Dárday and Györgyi Szalai), which was devised to encourage improvisation.

This so-called "factional" technique was employed with similar success in the second Dárday-Szalai collaboration, *Point of Departure/Metamorphosis* (*Átváltozás*, 1984). Cut down from eight hours to two hours and thirty-five minutes, this film focuses entirely on the interaction among family members and friends within a two-story suburban home. Dárday's two-hundred-and-fifteen-minute *The Documentator* (*A dokumentátor*, 1989) is a semi-documentary examination of the impact of Western-style media on Hungarians' social values and their daily lives. As a mode of analyzing contemporary social problems, the film-novel genre has become extremely popular with Hungarian audiences, and a new production group (Tarsulas) has been established to devote all of its activity to the form.

Hungarian cinema is one of the most politically acute and sensuously beautiful in the world today. Before the collapse of communism, it produced only twenty to twenty-five features per year on an average budget of $300,000 per film, but it was the only cinema in Eastern Europe to have consistently maintained an international standing since its inception, and especially since World War II. Even today, scholastic standards for admission to the Academy of Dramatic and Cinematographic Art in Budapest are as rigorous as those of an American medical school—by the late 1980s, for example, there were twenty-seven applicants for every position—and it is militantly craft-oriented. All prospective directors are required first to study screenwriting and cinematography, and the industry itself is notoriously exclusive. (Between 1978 and 1983, Hungary's 121 theatrical features were directed by only 70 people.)



Satan's Tango (*Sátántangó*; Béla Tarr, 1994).

Before 1990, as in other Eastern European countries, the state film monopoly, Mafilm, was divided into five semiautonomous production groups (including the Béla Balázs Studio) that turned out documentaries, animated shorts, children's films, film-novels, and regular features, which were marketed through the state distribution agency, Hungarofilm. Hungary also has the only Eastmancolor processing plant in the former Eastern bloc, and in the late 1980s, it had begun an aggressive campaign of co-production with the West.

In May 1988, Károly Grósz replaced the aged János Kádár as party secretary and began reforms that paved the way for democracy from the top down. In 1990, however, Hungary experienced a severe financial crisis. (Socialist Hungary had introduced market principles into its economy as early as the 1970s, producing a so-called "goulash communism," which by 1989 had badly failed.) At that time, Mafilm director Zsolt Kézdi-Kovács calculated that the annual film production budget for 1990, frozen for the previous two years, had lost 30 percent of its value in real terms. There was near panic in the industry as distribution was opened to the U.S. majors, and Hungarian audiences—never particularly enamored of their national cinema's exquisite refinement—flocked to see American blockbusters. The industry came to a virtual standstill in early 1990, and rumors abounded that the Mafilm studio complex was about to be sold to the French.

By the summer of 1991, however, in the midst of its transition to market capitalism, the government had also created a structure for the continued flow of state funds into the film industry—the Motion Picture Foundation of Hungary (Magyar Mozgókép Alapítvány). This institution is run by industry representatives through a series of advisory boards, and it is charged with funding individual projects on the basis of artistic merit, with 60 percent reserved for projects submitted by the major Mafilm studios and 40 percent for individuals and other companies. The Motion Picture Foundation seems to ensure the continued existence of Hungary's cinema, if not its restoration to full strength. In 1991, for example, only fourteen Hungarian-produced features were released.

Yet despite its recent economic afflictions, decades of political repression, and its relatively small size (population 9.9 million; land mass 35,919 square miles), Hungary has evolved an extraordinarily sophisticated national film culture, requiring, for example, four years of academic film study in all of its public high schools. Moreover, there have traditionally been fewer constraints on filmmakers (and artists generally) in Hungary than in any other country in Eastern Europe, in part because the Hungarians were committed to a policy of gradual liberalization since the failure of their premature rebellion in 1956.

The nation's turn toward democracy since the fall of 1989 guarantees its artists ever greater freedom. It is wholly indicative of Hungarian cinema's resilience that one of its most remarkable films of the decade was produced in the worst year (1989–1990) of its postwar history—Ildikó Enyedi's feature debut, *My 20th Century* (*Az én XX. századom*), an astonishing, fabulistic display of the century's technological promise and ideological failure.

Hungarian cinema is still very much art-film oriented, and its chief provocateur during the 1990s was Béla Tarr (b. 1955), whose slow, visually stylized black-and-white sequence shots imparted a haunting Wellesian beauty to grim psychological dramas such as *Damnation* (*Kárhozat,* 1988), *Werckmeister Harmonies* (*Werckmeister harmóniák,* 2000), and above all, his masterpiece, *Satan's Tango* (*Sátántangó,* 1994), a seven-hour epic of bleakness and apocalyptic despair, judged by many critics to be the last great film of the twentieth century.

Tarr started as a straight social realist in the mode of Ken Loach and the style of John Cassavetes—for example, *Family Nest* (*Családi tüzfészek,* 1979), *The Outsider* (*Szabadgyalog,* 1981), and *Prefab People* (*Panelkapcsolat,* 1982)—but by the mid-1990s, he had evolved a unique and expressive cinematic voice, working closely with cinematographer Gábor Medvigy and co-writer László Kraznahorkai (who also wrote the source novels for *Satan's Tango* and *Werckmeister*) in a way that only the rich artistic traditions of Hungarian cinema could make possible. (With *The Man from London* [*A Londoni ferfi,* 2007] and *The Turin Horse* [*A torinoi lo,* 2011], Tarr claims to have directed his last films.)

As the director Imre Gyöngyössy once said so pointedly of his nation: "We are a small country . . . and we have a very, very difficult language and a very closed culture. Cinema has become for us a kind of international language, to open the doors and to make a dialogue between different cultures, sometimes different continents."

Former Yugoslavia

The Yugoslavs in effect had no national film industry until after World War II, and their cinema did not attract attention abroad until fifteen years thereafter,

when the Zagreb school of animation began piling up international awards. With the exception of Poland, no country in Eastern Europe suffered more wartime devastation than Yugoslavia, which had been created at the end of World War I out of six separate republics made up of six Slavic nationalities—the Bosnian Muslims, the Croatians, the Macedonians, the Montenegrins, the Serbs, and the Slovenes.

Officially named the "Land of the South Slavs," the country was founded on December 1, 1918, as a constitutional monarchy to be ruled by Alexander I of Serbia. Alexander was assassinated by Croatian nationalists in 1934, and after seven years of negotiating with Germany, Yugoslavia was invaded by the Wehrmacht on April 6, 1941, and forced into an unconditional surrender in eleven days. Yugoslavia was then dismembered and divided among the bordering Axis states. Resistance was quickly organized by two separate groups, the Chetniks, led by Colonel (later General) Draža Mihajlović and loyal to the government-in-exile of Peter II, and the Communist Partisans, led by Marshal Tito. Cooperating at first, the two groups ended by fighting each other and the brutal Croatian Ustashi (Praetorian Guard) to the death in a savage civil war, in which the Partisans, liberally assisted by the Allies, were victorious over all factions. Politically, they won the widespread support of the people and proclaimed Yugoslavia a federal "People's Republic"—modeled on the USSR—in November 1945, with Tito as party secretary and president.

In 1948, Tito broke with Stalin over Yugoslavian self-determination, and the country was expelled from the Cominform (an alliance of Communist countries) in June. Even though Yugoslavia resumed relations with the Soviet Union in 1955, it developed in the interim an economic system based on worker self-management and regional autonomy quite different from the planned central economies of the rest of the Eastern bloc (it also remained nonaligned in the Cold War, identifying itself, at Tito's behest, with the Third World in international politics).

The complexity of Yugoslavia's so-called socialist market economy mirrored the diversity of a state of 24 million people comprising six republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia) and two autonomous provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo), with three official languages (Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, and Macedonian), three major religions (Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Muslim), and two alphabets (Cyrillic, based on Greek; and Latin, supplemented with diacritical marks).

The Yugoslav resistance against the Nazis, plus the civil war, known collectively as the National War of Liberation, left 1.9 million of the country's 16 million people dead and its economic infrastructure nearly destroyed. When Belgrade was liberated by the Red Army and the Yugoslav Partisans in October 1944, the country had virtually no material base for film production or distribution, and most of its five hundred theaters were badly damaged by war.

Partisan Cinema and Nationalist Realism

The new Communist government, led by former Partisan commander and marshal of Yugoslavia Josip Broz, known as Tito (1892–1980), quickly instituted a federal Committee for Cinematography, which in turn established regional committees in each of the six republics. The committee also began construction of a new studio complex, Film City (Filmski grad), at Kosŭtnak on the outskirts of Belgrade; founded a state film school (the Faculty of Dramatic Arts) at Belgrade,



Former Partisan commander and marshal of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz, known as Tito (c. 1944).



Dušan Vukotić displays his whimsical style in *Opera Cordis* (Dušan Vukotić, 1969).

with separate technical institutes at Belgrade and Zagreb; and established the monthly journal *Film* as a forum for criticism, polemics, and theoretical debate. By 1951, in spite of the economic dislocations that followed Tito's dramatic break with Stalin and Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform in June 1948, centrally administered subsidies from the State Film Fund had increased more than ten times, and the country had produced thirteen features. Most of these were patriotic Partisan war epics or dramas of socialist reconstruction, and they all followed the principles of "nationalist realism," Yugoslavia's more moderate variant of Zhdanovian socialist realism.

During this same period, however, Yugoslavia produced more than five hundred compilation films, documentary shorts, and newsreel segments (known collectively as *kinokronika*) that graphically documented the horrors of the National War of Liberation and early socialist efforts to rebuild the country. Finally, by 1951, central studios were in operation in all six of the republics, and the number of Yugoslav theaters had nearly doubled to some 920, as had domestic ticket sales.

On June 27, 1950, the National Assembly passed the "Basic Law on the Management of State Economic Enterprises and Higher Economic Associations by the Work Collectives," more commonly known as the law on workers' self-management, which, as Daniel J. Goulding points out, became the second founding myth of the postwar Yugoslav state (after the National War of Liberation). This legislation introduced Tito's unique concept of a socialist market economy, in which ownership was neither solely private nor public, but rather administered for the state through a trusteeship of autonomous workers' councils.

For the fledgling film industry, this meant the dissolution of the Committee for Cinematography and the formation of the Union of Film Workers of Yugoslavia, whose production groups were theoretically free to raise their own funds through distribution contracts, leasing and rental fees, co-production royalties, and the like, just as in the West. In practice, however, the industry was too underdeveloped for these arrangements, and the new system did not get off the ground until the passage of the Basic Law of Film in 1956, which replaced state subsidies with a tax on film admission tickets, the lion's share of which went to finance new production.

This mode of self-finance enabled the rate of domestic production to rise from six films per year through 1954 to fourteen films annually from 1957 through 1960. During the same period, admissions for domestic films more than tripled, and for foreign films (mainly American, owing to Tito's temporary break with Moscow), doubled. Furthermore, nineteen co-productions had been undertaken by the end of the decade, many of them with Western countries. In the late 1950s and the early 1960s, a movement toward formal experimentation began to coalesce around several institutions outside of the mainstream feature cinema.

One was the specialized animation studio Zagreb Film, founded in 1953, where the Croatian writer-director Vatroslav Mimica (b. 1923) and the Montenegrin Dušan Vukotić (1927–1998) pioneered an abstract, whimsical style that won international acclaim for Yugoslavian cinema in such films as the former's *Alone* (*Samac*; Festival Prize, Venice, 1958) and the latter's *Ersatz* (*Surogat*; American Academy Award, 1961, the first ever for a foreign animated film).

Another realm of modernist experimentation was that of the documentary and the short film, with "schools" centered in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo, where future feature directors such as Puriša Djordjević (b. 1924) and Aleksander Petrović (1929–1994) were trained. Finally, there was a strong Yugoslav amateur film movement organized by the country's leading film theorist, Dušan Stojanović, around the Belgrade ("Beograd") *kino klub*. It was in this context that future leaders of the *novi film* movement (also called *novi val*, or "new wave"), such as Dušan Makavejev (b. 1932), Živojin Pavlović (1933–1998), and Boštjan Hladnik (1929–2006), made their first shorts.

Novi Film

In the 1960s, Yugoslav cinema experienced a further decentralization of its production activities, as studios were established in the two autonomous regions of



Three (*Tri*; Aleksander Petrović, 1965).

Vojvodina and Kosovo, and it entered into its most richly creative period. The annual rate of production in 1961 was thirty-three features, double that of the previous decade, and in the years 1967 to 1969 it reached its zenith, averaging thirty-five features each year. Many of these were made under the rubric of *novi film* ("new film," or "open film"), an avant-garde movement closely associated with the wider agitation toward the democratization of Yugoslav society known as the Second Yugoslav Revolution.

Though *novi film* lacked a specific set of aesthetic principles, its advocates had as their goals (1) the liberation of the filmmaking process from bureaucratic constraints and ideological dogma, (2) the promotion of experiments with film as an audiovisual language along the lines of the French and Czech new waves, and (3) the use of film to examine contemporary themes—when necessary, from a critical perspective. Innovative in terms of means, *novi film* conceived of its practice firmly within the context of a Marxist-Leninist state and was not intent on political subversion. Yet officials of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), the country's ruling (and only) party, initially saw things in a different light, and there were numerous examples of films being banned for portraying a "meaningless view of life" inside the People's Republic of Yugoslavia.

Yet the tide began to turn at the 1965 Pula Festival, where Aleksander Petrović's third film, *Three* (*Tri*), won first prize; Puriša Djordjević inaugurated his surrealist tetralogy on the Partisan war and its aftermath with *Girl* (*Devojka*); and Dušan Makavejev made his feature debut with *Man Is Not a Bird* (*Čovek nije tica*)—all of which were well received.

(right) Milena Dravic in *WR—The Mysteries of the Organism* (*WR—Misterije organizma*; Dušan Makavejev, 1971).



At its height, *novi film* activity was centered in the country's two largest production sites, Belgrade and Zagreb. At Belgrade, Petrović, for example, followed *Three*, his multi-episode reevaluation of the sacrosanct War of National Liberation, with *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (*Skupljači perja*, 1967), an unromanticized portrait of Gypsy life, filmed with nonactors and an authentic multilingual sound track, which shared the Grand Prix at Cannes. Pavlović's most important "new films" were often dark and brutally naturalistic: *Awakening of the Rats* (*Budjenje pacova*, 1966) is an account of degradation among slum-dwellers in contemporary Belgrade, and *When I Am Pale and Dead* (*Kad budem mrtav i beo*, 1967) is a bitter comedy about a pop musician, the human detritus of forced industrialization. During this same period in Belgrade, Puriša Djordjević completed his stylized tetralogy on the War of Liberation and its aftermath with *Dream* (*San*, 1966), *Morning* (*Jutro*, 1967), and *Noon* (*Podne*, 1968).

Yet the most widely acclaimed director to emerge from the Belgrade *novi film* group by far was the Serbian Dušan Makavejev, who might best be described as an avant-garde satirist of great intellect. The forms of his films are experimental, and their subject is sexual and social repression, which he sees as intimately related phenomena. *Man Is Not a Bird* (1965) is a satirical romantic comedy set against the backdrop of an east Serbian copper mine that evokes the dehumanization of the socialist worker through regimentation. In *An Affair of the Heart*, or *The Tragedy of the Switchboard Operator* (*Ljubavni slučaj ili tragedija službenice PTT*, 1967), a film about the relationship among social structures, love, and sex, Makavejev inaugurated experiments in free association that culminated in the phenomenal cinematic essay *WR—The Mysteries of the Organism* (*WR—Misterije organizma*, 1971).

In between, he made the remarkable montage piece *Innocence Unprotected* (*Nevinost bez zaštite*, 1968), which juxtaposes excerpts from the first Serbian "all-talking" film, made clandestinely by circus strongman Dragoljub Aleksić during the Nazi occupation in 1942, with documentary footage from the period, animation, and interviews with members of the original production crew. Clearly influenced by the work of Věra Chytilová in Czechoslovakia, *WR* is a surrealist collage that applies the radical theories of the Austrian psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957) critically to both capitalist decadence and socialist authoritarianism. Like Reich, Makavejev ultimately equates social and sexual repression. The film won several international awards, including the Luis Buñuel Prize at Cannes, but it was banned in Yugoslavia and eventually forced Makavejev's emigration to the West.

In Zagreb, the most important *novi film* figure was the former animator Vatroslav Mimica (b. 1923), whose most powerful "new film," however, was the radically experimental *Kaja, I'll Kill You* (*Kaja, ubit ću te*, 1967), which uses the Italian occupation of a Dalmatian coastal town during World War II to examine the psychopathology of Fascism.

Another Zagreb-based filmmaker, the documentarist Krsto Papić (1933–2013), won international acclaim for his feature *Handcuffs* (*Lisice*, 1970), on the brutal and random purging of Stalinists in a small Croatian village just after Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform in the summer of 1948.

By the end of the decade, the influence of *novi film* had reached well beyond Belgrade and Zagreb to the provinces. At the newly established Neoplanta Film at Novi Sad, for example, Želimir Žilnik (b. 1942) made the archetypal "new film" in his debut feature, *Early Works* (*Rani radovi*, 1969), a radical reflection on Marx's own *Early Works*, which won the Golden Bear at Berlin but was banned from domestic distribution. At Bosnia Film in Sarajevo, the documentarist Bato Čengić (b. 1933) followed his controversial antiwar film *Little Soldiers* (*Mali vojnici*, 1968) with the ideological satire *Scenes from the Life of a Shock Worker* (*Slike iz života udarnika*, 1972), the latter focused on the political absurdities and human tragedies of Yugoslavia's postwar industrialization campaign. And in Slovenia, at Ljubljana, the film critic and former Godard assistant Matjaž Klopčič (1934–2007) directed *On Wings of Paper* (*Na papirnatih avionih*, 1967), a film about the transience of contemporary media and modern love.

Between 1969 and 1972, however, political events conspired to turn the tide against *novi film*. The June 1968 student demonstrations in Belgrade had alarmed Yugoslav authorities, and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August had chastened them. More frightening yet, the Croatian nationalist movement erupted into antigovernment terrorism in 1971, when Tito was seventy-nine and still without a chosen successor. These circumstances pushed the League of Communists to the right once more and resulted in a purge of nonorthodox Marxists. Makavejev was expelled from the party and forced into exile in Paris; Petrović was dismissed from his faculty position at the film academy for "extreme political negligence" and also emigrated to France; Pavlović was similarly

dismissed but reinstated without rank the following year. The term *new film* was officially replaced with *black film* (after a polemical essay by Vladimír Jovičić titled "The Black Wave in Our Film" in *Borba*, the central daily of the LCY, in 1969) to condemn the movement's ideologically unconventional films.

The "Prague Group"

Yugoslavian cinema did not make a real comeback until the late 1970s and the early 1980s, when a new course was charted by five young directors known as the "Prague Group," because they had all studied at FAMU in the years of the "black film" counterattack. As the Yugoslav heirs of Forman, Menzel, Passer, and Chytilová, the members of the Prague Group practiced a kind of absurdist social satire, without the confrontational politics of their *novi film* predecessors. They also formed the kind of close collaborative relationship among themselves and other young Yugoslav filmmakers that once characterized the French New Wave, and won large domestic audiences plus many international awards.

The members of the original Prague Group were the directors Goran Paskaljević (b. 1947), Goran Marković (b. 1946), Lordan Zafranović (b. 1944), Rajko Grlić (b. 1947), and Srđan Karanović (b. 1945), as well as the cinematographers Živko Zalar (b. 1948), Vilko Filač (b. 1950), and Miodrag Popović (1923–1996). Paskaljević's most critically successful and popular films have been *The Beach Guard in Winter* (*Čuvar plaže u zimskom periodu*, 1976), *The Dog Who Liked Trains* (*Pas koji je voleo vozove*, 1978), *The Days Are Passing* (*Zemaljski dani teku*, 1979), and *Special Treatment* (*Poseban tretman*, 1980). Later, his *Deceptive Summer of '68* (*Varljivo leto*, 1984) provided a deftly comic treatment of a Yugoslav student's sexual initiation by a young Czech girl during the Prague Spring. The film, an *hommage* to FAMU, is deliberately evocative of both Forman's *Black Peter* (1963) and Menzel's *Closely Watched Trains* (1966). *Guardian Angel* (*Andjeo čuvar*, 1987; written and produced by the director), conversely, is a horrifying documentary-style exposé of the traffic in Gypsy children between



Cabaret Balkan (Goran Paskaljević, 1999).

Yugoslavia and Italy, while *Cabaret Balkan* (1999) is about random rage and violence among disaffected inhabitants of Belgrade in the mid-1990s.

Marković is best known for his fast-paced comedies about contemporary Yugoslav youths in such films as *Special Education* (*Specijalno vaspitanje*, 1977), *National Class up to 26 Feet* (*Nacionalna klasa do 785 cm*, 1979), and *Teachers, Teachers* (*Majstori, majstori*, 1981), all bearing the marked influence of the Czech New Wave. His *Variola Vera* (1982) is a dark satire about the incompetence of medical and public-health officials during an outbreak of the fatal strain of smallpox named in the title, while *Taiwan Canasta* (*Tajvanska kanasta*, 1985) is an ironic comedy about an aging hippie unable to find a place in a society that, he feels, has betrayed his youthful idealism. *Déjà vu* (*Već viđeno*) is a stylish psychological thriller in the Hitchcock mode.

Lordan Zafranović is the most visionary filmmaker of the group, as demonstrated by his *Occupation in Twenty-Six Scenes* (*Okupacija u 26 slika*, 1978). This poetic re-creation of the Italian occupation of the ancient coastal city of Dubrovnik evokes the graciousness of prewar bourgeois life, as well as the brutal smashing of that order by the Fascists and their bestial Ustashi collaborators. Zafranović's next film, which also won a Pula First Prize, was similarly concerned with the effects of the war on his native Dalmatian coast and appeared to be the second work in a trilogy on the subject: *Fall of Italy* (*Pad Italije*, 1981; English title: *Island Chronicle*) is a stylized and often grimly beautiful account of Partisan fighting and Italian reprisals on a small Adriatic island. *Evening Bells* (*Večernja zvona*, 1986) is set in the crucible of Yugoslavia's civil war; Zafranović won several international awards for it in the year of its release.



Do You Remember Dolly Bell? (*Sjećaš li se Dolly Bell?*; Emir Kusturica, 1981).

Rajko Grlić's *Bravo Maestro* (1978), conversely, has a contemporary setting and comments caustically on the rise of an ambitious young composer who manages to subvert the self-management system of the musical establishment by manipulating personal connections (*veze*), as so many Yugoslavs of the time learned to do. Srđan Karanović is an important collaborator of Grlić's and is a major Yugoslav director in his own right. His *The Scent of Wild Flowers* (*Miris poljskog cveća,* 1978), which shared the International Critics' Prize at Cannes, is a subtly ironic portrayal of an aging, world-famous actor who tries vainly to find some personal respite from the media's ravenous appetite for publicity, scandal, and "news."

Considerably more dense and sober, *Petra's Wreath* (*Petrijin venac*, 1980) is about the traumatized lifetime odyssey of an illiterate peasant before, during, and after the war, based on the experiences of a real woman. With *Something in Between* (*Nešto izmedju*, 1983), which took first prizes at both the Pula and the Valencia festivals, Karanović proved himself to be the leading intellectual filmmaker of his generation. Shot in English, with locations in New York, Belgrade, Dubrovnik, and Istanbul, this sophisticated comedy is on its surface about the whirlwind competition between two Yugoslav men, one a respected surgeon and the other a charming rogue, for the affections of an American female journalist on a six-week Eastern tour; on another level, however, the film is a social commentary on the contradictions inherent in Yugoslav daily life and the country's unique position "in between" East and West.

Closely associated with the Prague Group are the directors Miloš Radivojević (b. 1939), Bogdan Žižić (b. 1934), Slobodan Šijan (b. 1946), and Emir Kusturica (b. 1954). Radivojević's work tends toward the experimental and often deals with mental breakdown. With *Una, My Love* (1986), Radivojević captured worldwide attention in a wildly erotic film about a sultry female student employed by the state to seduce her journalism professor and pump him for enough information to send him to jail. All of Radivojević's films are remarkably patterned in formal terms; *Dreams, Life and Death of Filip Filipović* (1980), for example, mixes archival period footage with distorted wide-angle images of the title character's reveries.

Yet ironically, the rising star of Yugoslav cinema in the mid-1980s was the Bosnian director Emir Kusturica, whose award-winning films *Do You Remember Dolly Bell?* (*Sjećaš li se Dolly Bell?*, 1981) and *When Father Was Away on Business* (*Otac na službenom putu*, 1985)



Pierre Clémenti and Anna Prucnal in *Sweet Movie* (Dušan Makavejev, 1974).

brought new prominence to Sarajevo as a production center. As a recent graduate of FAMU (1978), where he studied under Jiři Menzel, Kusturica worked in collaboration with the Bosnian poet Abdulah Sidran as a screenwriter and the FAMU-trained Vilko Filač as a cinematographer to mine a vein of ironic, even tragicomic, reminiscence from his region's recent past.

Dolly Bell, for example, which won the Golden Lion at Venice, is an anecdotal story of a young boy's coming of age in a patriarchal Muslim family on the outskirts of Sarajevo in the early 1960s; while *Father*, which won the Palme d'Or Award at Cannes, assumes the perspective of an even younger child in the period 1947–1952, when Tito had broken with Stalin and countless innocent Yugoslavs experienced arbitrary denunciation and imprisonment in a Stalinist-style purge directed against suspected Stalinists.

Similar to other films by members of the Prague Group and their associates discussed earlier, Kusturica's were both critically successful and popular with audiences at home and abroad (*Father*, for example, did a brisk business in the United States and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film). Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies* (*Dom za vesanje*, 1989), however, is much less mainstream than his earlier work in its poetic evocation of Gypsy life and its occasionally experimental structure.

Of the major *novi film* directors, only Dušan Makavejev has not participated actively in his country's cinema since the "black film" counteroffensive of the early 1970s; all of his subsequent films were made abroad, until 1988. *Sweet Movie* (1974), for example, was shot on location in the United States and Western Europe. Like *WR*, it uses the strategies of free association and, more especially, the manipulation of alternately attractive and repellent images to counterpose American commodity fetishism with the decadence of the Marxist ideal. Although it acquired a reputation for scandal, the film was a critical and commercial failure, and Makavejev has had difficulty funding his productions ever since.

One effect has been to push him in the direction of more conventional narrative form, as the Swedish-British co-production *Montenegro/Pigs and Pearls* (1981) demonstrates. Shot with English dialogue, the film concerns an American-born Swedish housewife neglected by her businessman husband, who escapes into a world of anarchistic sexual pleasure at the "Zanzibar," an underground club for transplanted Montenegrins in Stockholm. This linear plot contrasts sharply with an elaborate montage structure featuring graphic close-ups of sexual activity and nudity in motion, plus Makavejev's characteristic psychoanalytic equation of violence, sex, blood, and death.

Similarly, the Australian-financed *Coca-Cola Kid* (1985), a decade in preparation and two years in production, mixes eroticism and social satire with a more or less conventional plot: a corporate troubleshooter is sent from Atlanta to a remote part of Australia to discover why Coca-Cola sales have dried up. The ensuing feud between the parties counterposes American and Australian attitudes toward everything from politics to sex and ends in a merger.

In 1988, Makavejev made his first film in Yugoslavia in twenty years, although it was produced by the American-based Cannon Group. Shot on location in the beautiful Slovenian village of Skofja Loka and adapted from a story by Zola, *Manifesto* (1988) is a comedy of political intrigue set in an unnamed Central European country in 1920, and like all of Makavejev's work, it is ultimately about the relationship between sex and revolution. More typical, *Gorilla Bathes at Noon* (1992; a German-Yugoslav co-production) is a hilarious satire of Marxist-Leninism set in November 1989 in Berlin that uses footage from the Stalinist epic *The Fall of Berlin* (Mikheil Chiaureli, 1949) to comment on the dismantling of East German Communism.

Since that time, Makavejev has not produced a feature film, although he contributed the "Dream" sequence to the anthology *Danish Girls Show Everything* (*Danske piger viser alt*) in 1996.

Lacking the distinguished national traditions of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, Yugoslav cinema was spontaneously generated in the postwar era to become during the next several decades one of the most unusual in all of Eastern Europe. Not a little of its success was owed the vision of Josip Tito, who not only echoed Lenin on the importance of film for socialist society, saying, "Film is one of the most influential means of modern communication and its social, moral, and educational role is, therefore, great," but was himself an avid film buff who saw every feature film made in his country in his lifetime.

His death on April 5, 1980, was mourned very specifically as a loss for Yugoslav cinema, as well as for the country at large. It was Tito's vision that gave Yugoslavia its unique concept of worker self-management, which meant for the film industry a level of autonomy and competition among its twenty-seven production companies that by the late 1980s very nearly resembled the American system. Unlike Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary before 1990, where state subsidies guaranteed the careers of critically successful filmmakers, even when the box office didn't, Yugoslavia generated the lion's share of its film financing from the domestic audience.

So it was a sign of great promise that the films of the Prague Group and its associates managed to outdistance first-run American films at the Yugoslav box office in every year from 1978 to 1988. In the years of their release, in fact, Karanović's *Something in Between* (1983) and Kusturica's *When Father Was Away on Business* (1985) outsold their nearest American competitors in the urban centers by three to one. At the same time, Yugoslavia Film—the national association of Yugoslav producers, distributors, and exhibitors—was making plans to mount an aggressive marketing campaign to ensure widespread distribution of its films to the West. As the decade closed, the world anticipated both superb entertainment and critical distinction from Yugoslav cinema for years to come.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, it seemed briefly possible that Yugoslavia might follow Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia toward liberal democracy, but Slobodan Milosĕvić, the Communist president of Serbia, began at once to exploit the paranoid nationalism of the country's most populous and powerful republic and agitate for the creation of an ethnically "pure" Serbian state. By the end of 1993, Bosnia had been virtually partitioned, with Serbian forces occupying two-thirds of the country outside of Sarajevo and the Croatians controlling the rest, and what had become by then the second Yugoslav civil war—complete with "ethnic cleansing" and other world-class atrocities—was in full swing.

Yugoslav cinema fell apart, as Yugoslavia itself did. First, there was separatism, then war. The first signs of trouble came with a serious decline in production, from thirty-six films in 1988 to twenty-five in 1989. At

(right) Moreno D'E Bartolli, Pavle Vuisić, Mustafa Nadarević, and Mira Furlan in *When Father Was Away on Business* (Emir Kusturica, 1985).

the same time, however, nearly all of the forty "black films" shelved during the late 1960s and the 1970s were rehabilitated and directors such as Žilnik, Petrović, and Čengić were given a chance to work again in their native industry. By 1990, though, the production systems of the six republics had begun to pull apart and falter: the Serbian system, which had regularly accounted for half of the annual Yugoslav output (fifteen to eighteen out of thirty-five), announced that in the future it would produce only six to eight films per year; Croatia's Jadran Film committed itself exclusively to foreign co-production, making only a single film for domestic distribution; and Bosnia stocked its theaters with television features transferred to film.

Signs of impending civil strife loomed when Croatian director Rajko Grlić was attacked by his compatriots for making *Caruga* (*Charuga*, 1991), on the subject of a Serbian bandit-hero, and Serbian director Srđan Karanović was denied a share of Croatian funding for *Virginia* (*Virgina*, 1991), a grim tale of peasant life in nineteenth-century Serbia that became the last film produced in a united Yugoslavia. In that same year, Goran Paskaljević removed his *Time of Miracles* (*Vreme čudam*, 1990) from the thirty-seventh annual Pula Festival.

In 1991, the thirty-eighth Pula Festival was canceled for political reasons, and by 1992, Pula was no longer a Yugoslav film festival at all but an exclusively Croatian one, showcasing eight Croat features. At the same time, Serbian cinema, its state film bureaucracy recently supplemented by a handful of private producer-distributors, continued to produce interesting work for a domestic market nearly ruined by wartime inflation and UN economic sanctions.



With markets split and/or physically destroyed and the former national audience divided against itself in civil war, Yugoslav cinema, like Yugoslavia itself, has ceased to exist. In its forty-five-year history, it had produced 904 feature films, nearly half of which (426) were Serbian, but 186 of which were true interrepublican co-productions made possible by the extraordinary creative and financial context of the unified Yugoslav film industry. Maja Vujovic has linked the destruction of Yugoslav cinema with the pathology of state censorship under Tito: "The same paranoia that sought to lobotomise Yugoslavian cinema . . . generated a savage national chauvinism offscreen and thus destroyed the delicate device it had governed: a multi-national, multi-religious, cosmopolitan Yugoslavia."

In this context, Bosnian director Emir Kusturica's *Underground* (1995), a French-German-Hungarian co-production that won the 1995 Cannes Grand Prix, can be seen as a eulogy for Yugoslav cinema's fragmentary remains, as well as for the nation itself. In fact, much of this epic black comedy of Yugoslavia from 1941 to 1992 revolves around the production of a socialist-realist–style film glorifying a legendary hero of the Partisan war ("Blacky"), who was in fact a common criminal; the mendacity of the film within the film suggests that the whole Yugoslav state has been built on a lie, and in a visionary reprise at *Underground*'s conclusion, all of its main characters (most of them long dead) come together at an outdoor wedding feast on the banks of the Danube to sing a song celebrating Yugoslav unity, when the land mass they occupy begins to break up and its fragments float away separately into the river.

Similarly, Srđan Dragojević's (b. 1963) *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* (*Lepa sela lepo gore*, 1996), which presents a startling view of the Bosnian war from the Serbian perspective, is dedicated "To the Cinema of a Country That No Longer Exists," acknowledging the crucial role that the course of the one had in the shaping the other.

The war in Kosovo and the NATO bombing of Belgrade in March 1999 seriously inhibited the Serbian film industry (one of the primary targets was RTS—Radio Television of Serbia; its offices and transmitters were destroyed and sixteen employees were killed), and the first features to appear after the war were set during the NATO raids and shot on digital video: Milutin Petrović's *The Land of Truth, Love, and Freedom* (*Zemlja istine, ljubavi slobode*, 2000), the title referring ironically to life under Milosĕvić; and



Underground (Emir Kusturica, 1995).



Branko Djuric and Rene Bitorajac in *No Man's Land* (Danis Tanović, 2001).

Darko Bajić's *War Live* (*Rat uzivo*, 2000), about a film crew operating in Belgrade during the attacks.

The Croatian industry makes between six and ten features a year, most of them co-produced with HRT (Hvratsk Televizija, or Croatian Television), and the Ministry of Culture funds animation, documentary, and experimental films. Since the death of President Franjo Tudjman in December 1999, and the ouster of his Croatian Democratic Party from power in 2000, there has been a liberalization of media policy.

In Bosnia, cinema has more or less disappeared. Not only was its material base in Sarejevo destroyed by years of shelling, but the breakup of Yugoslavia left its filmmakers without access to equipment rental and laboratory facilities in Belgrade and Zagreb. A large-scale epic on the Bosnian war by Partisan film veteran Veljko Bulajić (b. 1928) has been sidetracked several times since the Dayton Accords by ethnic politics (Bulajić is a Montenegrin residing in Croatia), but in 2001, Bosnian writer/director Danis Tanović produced there, with French backing, his grim antiwar satire *No Man's Land*, and the film won an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film, at least giving the idea of a Bosnian cinema a much-needed shot in the arm.

Bulgaria

Some fifty-five feature films were produced in Bulgaria in the thirty-five years before Boris Borozanov's *Kalin the Eagle* (*Kalin Orelat*, 1950) appeared as the first fiction film of the recently nationalized film industry. Bulgaria had entered World War II on the side of the Germans in 1941 but, when defeated by the Soviet Union on September 10, 1944, it became one of that country's staunchest allies. By 1957, the new Bulgarian film industry had produced a total of twenty-six features, no small accomplishment for an enterprise that began in 1950 with (by Zahari Zhandov's account) two or three Arriflex cameras, antiquated sound equipment, and few laboratories or theaters.

A major turning point for Bulgarian cinema was Rangel Vulchanov's (1928–2013) *On a Small Island* (*Na malkiia ostrov*, 1958), scripted by the poet Valeri Petrov (1920–2014) and shot in thirty days on the Black Sea island of Saint Anastasia. Set just after the September 1923 uprising, when the island was used as a prison camp for suspected rebels, the film describes the doomed escape attempt of four individuals—a fisherman, a student, a carpenter, and a doctor—who represent a cross section of Bulgarian society and become in the film's stylization a metaphor for the destiny of the country as an independent state.

Sun and Shadow (*Slansteto i syankata*, 1962), which won a number of international awards, is an abstract statement on the cultural paranoia induced by living under the constant threat of a nuclear war between East and West, and it called world attention to the dynamic potential of Bulgarian cinema, as did Binka Zheliazkova's (1923–2011) *We Were Young* (*A biiahme mladi*, 1961). Like Vulchanov, a graduate of the Sofia Academy of Dramatic Art, Zheliazkova was the first woman director in Bulgaria, and her feature debut was a lyrical story of love among Sofia Resistance fighters during World War II, composed in the style of modern Bulgarian pictorial art.

So, too, was the directorial debut of the cinematographer Vulo Radev (1923–2001), *The Peach Thief* (*Kradetsut na praskovi*, 1964), a romantic story about a love triangle among a Bulgarian officer, his wife, and a Serbian POW, set in the ancient fortress city of Turnovo during World War I and distinguished by its lush visual imagery.

Zheliazkova returned to directing with the extraordinary *The Attached Balloon* (*Privarzaniat balon*, 1966; released 1967), an absurdist fantasy about a military dirigible that drifts into the vicinity of an isolated peasant village during World War II. The villagers see the balloon as a magical source of escape from their wretched daily lives and attempt to fly away in it, only to discover that it is tethered as firmly to the earth as they themselves are. Full of black humor and sardonic allusions to Stalinism, the film was released a year late

and then quietly shelved. The cultural thaw that made such turnabouts possible occurred in Bulgaria much later than in other Eastern bloc countries. It was not until the late 1960s that signs of a real cultural thaw began to emerge, in such films as Grisha Ostrovski and Todor Stoianov's *Sidetrack* (*Otklonenie*, 1967) and Todor Dinov and Hristo Hristov's *Iconostasis* (*Ikonostasat*, 1969).

Ostrovski (1918–2007) and Stoianov's (1930–1999) *Sidetrack*, scripted by the poet Blaga Dimitrova, received international attention as the first Bulgarian film to deal openly with the Stalinist past. It is constructed as a series of Resnais-like flashbacks triggered by a chance meeting between two former lovers and party comrades, although its ultimate stylistic allegiance is to Antonioni. *Iconostasis* was directed in 1969 by the distinguished animator Todor Dinov (1919–2004) and by Hristo Hristov (b. 1926), who had recently graduated from the VGIK (All-Union State Institute of Cinematography in Soviet Union). Filmed by Atanas Tasev in widescreen in austere black and white, *Iconostasis* recounts the life, the dreams, and the visions of a late-nineteenth-century iconostasis woodcarver who draws on the depth and breadth of the national folk culture for his inspiration.

The year of the release of *Iconostasis* corresponded with the twenty-third anniversary of the Bulgarian People's Republic (BPR). Within that period, its cinema had produced 160 features; 1,003 documentaries; 1,164 popular science films; and 144 cartoons. The number of theaters had increased exponentially from 165 in 1944 to 2,900, while total attendance had leaped from 13 million to more than 100 million per year. The annual production rate had risen to 14 features and 200 shorts.

In 1971, to accelerate this progress, Pavel Pisarev was appointed as the new general director for the Bulgarian State Cinematography Corporation. He reorganized it into three independent production units—Haemus, Mladost (Youth), and Sredets in 1973–1974, with a fourth, Suvremenik (Contemporary), added in 1978–1979—and saw to the establishment of a Film and Television Academy in Sofia (VITIS) in 1973. Obviously, things were poised for change.

The next breakthrough was the stunning box-office success of Metodi Andonov's *The Goat Horn* (*Kozijat rog*, 1972), which was seen by more than 3 million Bulgarians in the year of its release. This revenge tragedy, adapted by Nikolai Haitov from his own short story, was set in the seventeenth century, when *haiduks* (roving, samurai-like bandits) conducted a kind of guerrilla warfare against the occupying Turks.

Nationalism was also a key element in Hristo Hristov's *Hammer or Anvil* (*Nakovalnia ili chuk*, 1972), a large-scale Soviet–East German–Bulgarian epic on the infamous Leipzig trial of Georgi Dmitrov, the Bulgarian patriot accused of setting the Reichstag fire in 1933. In 1973, a new generation of filmmakers announced itself to the world in a series of new works. Eduard Zahariev's (1938–1996) *Hare Census* (*Prebroiavane na divite zaitsi*), for example, won several international awards and achieved a milestone for Bulgarian cinema in its absurdist satire of socialist bureaucracy: it recounts the story of an official statistician who is inexplicably sent to survey the number of hares near a small village. In *And the Day Came* (*I doide deniat*), Georgi Djulgerov (b. 1943) inverted the standard formula for the "Eastern" (for Eastern Europeans, a Hollywood-style Western with a Resistance setting), to show Partisan warfare as it had really been—unheroic, inglorious, and tragically wasteful of the members of the "lost generation" who had waged it.

During the 1977–1978 season, Bulgarian cinema achieved an international profile that rivaled that of its Eastern-bloc neighbors. Eight films that won major festival awards appeared in this time frame, announcing a new artistic maturity for Bulgarian film. In its story of a conman during the Stalinist era, Georgi Djulgerov's *Advantage* (*Avantazh*, 1977), scripted by Djulgerov and photographed by Radoslav Spassov, contained more information about national political history than any Bulgarian film ever made.

Eduard Zahariev's *Manly Times* (*Muzhki vremena*, 1977), adapted by Nikolai Haitov from an ancient legend and brilliantly shot by Radoslav Spassov on location in the Rhodope Mountains, tells the story of a peasant girl kidnapped for a rich suitor by a *haiduk*; she falls in love with her abductor during the course of their arduous journey across the mountains—with tragic results. Binka Zheliazkova's *The Swimming Pool* (*Basseinat*, 1977) won a Gold Medal at Moscow for its Proustian story of memories from the Stalinist past called up by a gathering of former friends and comrades around a luxurious swimming pool.

As Bulgaria moved toward a jubilant celebration of its thirteen-hundredth anniversary as a nation (681–1981), the film industry was commissioned by the authorities of the State Cinematography Corporation to produce four superspectacles commemorating great events from the national past. In the spring of 1981, the first of the superspectacles appeared in Zhandov's *Master of Boiana*, a fictionalized biography of the anonymous

painter who did the world-famous egg-tempera frescoes at the Boiana Church on the outskirts of Sofia in 1259, a full half-century before Giotto introduced naturalism into religious painting in the West at the dawn of the Italian Renaissance. The film features vast sets duplicating the medieval village of Boiana and its church, which had recently been declared a cultural monument under UNESCO protection.

The second celebration film to be released in 1981 was Staikov's monumental national epic *Khan Asparukh*, which depicts the mass migration of the Proto-Bulgars from the steppes of Central Asia to the Danube region between AD 679–681. This was an event in Bulgarian history comparable to the Norman invasion of the British Isles in 1066, because it resulted in the foundation of the Bulgarian state and its national culture. Running six hours and released as three separate features, *Khan Asparukh* took more than a year to complete and employed some 50,000 extras from the Bulgarian army for its battle scenes. Sumptuously costumed and superbly photographed by Boris Ianakiev in widescreen Technovision and Eastmancolor, *Khan Asparukh* was seen by 11 million people in its first six months of release, creating a national—and perhaps even a world—per capita attendance record, because the population of Bulgaria was only about 9 million.

The last two of the great historical epics produced to celebrate Bulgaria's thirteen-hundredth anniversary were completed in 1983 and 1984, respectively. Georgi Stoianov's three-part *Constantine the Philosopher* tells the story of Cyril (Constantine) and Methodius, the ninth-century brother-saints who, as missionaries from the Greek Christian Church in Constantinople to the Moravian Slavs, devised the Cyrillic alphabet still used in Eastern Orthodox countries today and who prepared their disciples for the conversion of the Bulgarians, AD 864–865.

Borislav Sharaliev's *Boris the First*, an epic in two parts, scripted by Anzhel Wagenstein, deals with that conversion itself and with its impact on Bulgarian history. King Boris ascended the throne in 852 and was converted in 864; he ruled for thirty-seven years, until 889, and was ultimately succeeded by his son Simeon, who heralded the "Golden Age" of the First Bulgarian Empire. By choosing the Christianity of Constantinople over that of Rome and by elevating Simeon, Boris set the course of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Bulgaria for the next thousand years. Taken together, these three films, commissioned to celebrate Bulgaria's thirteenth centennial, chronicle the history of the Bulgarian people from their first migration from the Central Asian steppes through early Christianity to the cataclysmic events of the twentieth century. It would be difficult to find a comparable body of work in the history of Eastern European or indeed any other cinema, although Hungary's fascination with its own national past provides an obvious parallel.

After the anniversary celebration of 1981, New Bulgarian Cinema, as it was now known to international critics, continued to grow and prosper, producing major contributions. Before 1990, Bulgaria made approximately 25 theatrical features and 25 features for television per year, in addition to 25 animated films and more than 200 shorts and documentaries—an astounding rate for an industry that had averaged only one feature per year as late as 1953. All of these were produced under the authority of the Bulgarian State Cinematography Corporation (BCC), which had five separate components: Boiana Feature Film Studio, a vast production complex, or film city, located at the foot of Mt. Vitosha on the outskirts of Sofia; Sofia Animation Film Studio, made world-famous by the award-winning work of Todor Dinov during the 1960s; Vreme Popular Science and Documentary Film Studio; Film Laboratory, currently with facilities for processing Eastmancolor, Sovcolor, Fujicolor, and Orwocolor (which still makes Bulgaria an attractive site for foreign co-production); and Bulgariafilm, the industry's foreign trade, cultural exchange, and public-relations branch, which among its other functions distributed a large number of feature, documentary, and animated films to Western television and video companies.

Bulgarian filmmakers—formerly trained abroad, usually at the VGIK or another Eastern-bloc academy, or at the small film department within the Academy of Dramatic Art in Sofia—since 1973 have been able to attend the Sofia Film and Television Academy, which offers integrated degree programs in both cinema and theater. (Bulgarian cinema has always felt at home with its sister arts, with approximately 50 percent of its titles adapted from the national literature.) The Bulgarian film archive is one of the most sophisticated in the world, and attendance at the country's some 150 theaters is among the highest in all of Europe—and, it should be noted, essential to the survival of the industry, because the government eliminated direct production subsidies in 1968.

In 1990, the Bulgarian economy collapsed in the face of political upheaval and a staggering national debt; simultaneously, Bulgaria lost the Soviet Union as its primary trading partner and export market. The Boiana Film Studio, once the busiest on the Balkan peninsula,

was forced to cut its staff from 1,220 to 340, and not a single Bulgarian film project was initiated that year. In 1991, however, free elections were held, and the film industry was overhauled through the creation of the National Film Center (NFC) by an act of parliament. This agency is responsible for the allocation of state subsidies on the basis of artistic merit (as high as 80 percent for features) and for encouraging private investment. For more than a decade, however, that investment was not forthcoming, and what little production occurred was funded by the Television Films Production Center, created by Bulgarian National Television in 1998.

Yet 2007, when Bulgaria finally became a member of the European Union, was the first year of real hope since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. At that time, the passage of the Film Law increased public support for the industry by more than $6 million, enabling the NFC to contribute more successfully to production; the funding also encouraged Bulgarian National Television to participate more actively in some projects.

Romania

The Romanian film industry was initially more advanced than the Bulgarian by virtue of having its own film school, the Institute of Theater and Film Art (IATC), established in 1950, and an elaborate set of studios (completed in 1956) at Buftea, just outside of Bucharest. Romania produced about fifty full-length features even before World War II, many of them documentaries and travelogues funded by the Cinematographic Service of the National Tourism Office, established in 1936. After 1941, when the Cinematographic Service was transformed into the National Cinematographic Office (ONC), private production all but disappeared as a casualty of war. ONC dominated feature production until it, too, collapsed in 1943 after the failure of a joint filmmaking venture with the Italian government (CineRomIt).

Nationalization of the industry began in 1948 with even less of a material base than that which existed in Yugoslavia. From the beginning of the 1960s onward, the Romanians moved away from the Soviets, contracted economic and political relationships with the West, and became the only Warsaw Pact nation to maintain friendly relations with the People's Republic of China. Yet despite the adoption of a constitution calling for its complete independence in 1965, Romania remained, in practical terms, very much part of the Soviet-dominated Eastern bloc until the bloc's dissolution in 1989.

The first Romanian postwar films were rural dramas. Yet it wasn't until Premier Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, drawing his inspiration from Tito, led a successful movement to break away from the Soviet Union and its policies in the early 1960s that a truly national cinema began to emerge in the work of the first generation of IATC graduates—for example, Mircea Dragan (b. 1932), *The Forest of the Hanged* (*Padurea spinzuratilor*, 1965; winner of the Best Director Prize at Cannes that year); and Mircea Mureşan (b. 1930), *Blazing Winter* (*Rascoala*, 1965). During this same period, the work of Ion Popescu-Gopo (1923–1989) made Romania one of the world centers for animated film. In fact, since 1966, the International Festival of Animated Film has been held every second year in Mamaia (alternating with Annecy, France).

As part of the new "Romanization of Romanian Culture"—which included dropping compulsory Russian from the public-school curriculum, and elevating Romanian émigré artists such as sculptor Constantin Brâncuşi (1876–1957) and playwright Eugène Ionesco (1912–1994), both naturalized French citizens—Romanian filmmakers turned to the national historical tradition. They produced epics such as Sergiu Nicolaescu's (1930–2013) *The Dacians* (*Dacii*, 1966) and *Michael the Brave* (*Mihai viteazul*, 1971; an Oscar nominee), as well as films of the swashbuckling *haiduk* cycle of Dinu Cocea (1929–2013), which translate the plots and techniques of Hollywood Westerns into romantic tales of *haiduks*, patriotic Romanian brigands doing battle with corrupt foreign overlords in the Carpathians.

By 1965, the year in which Nicolae Ceauşescu (1918–1989) succeeded Gheorghiu-Dej as first secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, the country's film industry was in full swing, producing 15 to 18 features annually, plus approximately 25 animated cartoons and about 100 newsreels.

It was in this context that the first authentically Romanian auteur films appeared in the work of Lucian Pintilie (b. 1933), whose *Sunday at Six* (*Duminica lă ora 6*, 1965) and *Reconstruction* (*Reconstituirea*, 1969) both won an international following. The former was a Resnais-like evocation of an incident from the Resistance, skillfully directed and shot, and completely lacking in dogma, while the latter was a controversial allegory of social irresponsibility whose release was delayed for a year by Romaniafilm officials charging "evidence of Western influence."



Anda Onesa in *Anastasia Passed By/Gently Was Anastasia Passing* (*Duios Anastasia trecea*; Alexandru Tatos, 1980).

Reconstruction was in fact a profoundly Romanian film, focused on the perennial national traits of indifference to the fate of others and dereliction of duty, both encouraged by the consumption of enormous quantities of alcohol. It recounts the "reconstruction" of a crime by its original participants for an incompetent rural judge, all of whom couldn't care less about the event or its consequences. Strongly colored by Czech-inspired black humor, the film ends with a second and more serious crime being committed in the process of the reconstruction.

On the basis of films such as this, for a while it seemed as if there might be a Romanian cultural breakthrough of the sort experienced concurrently (however briefly) in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. This hope appeared to be crushed in the spring of 1971, when Ceauşescu, then president and self-proclaimed *conducatore* ("leader"), absorbed in forming a Stalin-like cult of personality, delivered a speech sharply critical of liberalizing tendencies among Romanian intelligentsia and creative artists. Yet in fact, Ceauşescu's attack was so stringent as to generate a strong wave of dissent, which resulted in an accommodation between Romanian politics and Romanian culture later in the year.

This left the way clear for the third generation of postwar Romanian filmmakers—"the Class of the 1970s," as it is called, because most of its members started working after the turn of the decade—to deal with themes that were formerly taboo in an atmosphere of increased tolerance for formal experimentation. Mircea Daneliuc (b. 1943) is the most prominent filmmaker of this generation, if not of all Romanian directors today, and he is followed closely by Dan Piţa (b. 1938), Mircea Veroiu (1941–1998), and Alexandru Tatos (1937–1990).

Daneliuc illuminated the generally dull landscape of the mid-1970s when his films such as *Microphone Test* (*Proba de microfon*, 1980) won enormous popular success and was nationally rated among the ten best Romanian films ever made. It employs *cinéma vérité* techniques to describe the hectic, if dispassionate, life of a TV news cameraman who tends to see reality in the terms of a filmic montage and who ultimately has a stormy romance with one of his interview subjects. The following year his *Fox-Hunting* (*Vînetoarea de vulpi*, 1981), adapted by Dinu Săraru from his best-selling novel *Some Peasants* (*Nişte ţrani*), was Daneliuc's most controversial work to date. It uses flashbacks, flashforwards, and multiple points of view to tell the story of a group of peasants in the postwar years who stubbornly refuse to cede their land to the state, while party officials argue with them just as stubbornly for the historical necessity of collectivization.

The best-known Romanian filmmaker after Daneliuc is Dan Pița, who directed two award-winning medium-length features with Mircea Veroiu about Carpathian peasant life—*The Stone Wedding* (*Nunta de piatra*, 1973) and its sequel, *Lust for Gold* (*Duhul aurului*, 1974)—before switching to contemporary issues in *Philip the Kind* (*Filip cel bun*, 1974), a realistic portrait of a young man's search for moral identity in the midst of rampant social change. He followed with a brilliant adaptation of the classic Romanian novel *A Summer Tale* (*Tanase scatiu*, 1976) by Duilui Zamfirescu. Photographed in luxurious sequence shots by Calin Ghibu, this beautiful and elliptical film centers on the fin-de-siècle power struggle between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, and is, from atmosphere through music to decor, highly reminiscent of a late Visconti vehicle in its incisive criticism of contemporary Romanian society.

After co-directing *The Stone Wedding* and *Lust for Gold* with Dan Pița, Mircea Veroiu achieved a masterpiece in his adaptation of Ioan Slavici's classic novel *Mara*, as *Beyond the Bridge* (*Dincolo de pod*, 1977). Set in a small town in Transylvania on the eve of the 1848 revolution, this film tells a Romantic love story in modern psychological terms, and its virtuoso photography by frequent Veroiu collaborator Calin Ghibu evokes the past in allusions to famous Flemish and other northern European Renaissance paintings.



Luminița Gheorghiu and Ion Fiscuteanu in *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* (Cristi Puiu, 2005).

Veroiu followed with *Mînia* (*Chronicle of the Barefoot Emperors*, 1978), an epic film based on the tragic peasant uprising of 1907, when more than 11,000 rebels were shot down by the Romanian Army of King Carol.

Alexandru Tatos (1937–1990) brought into Romanian cinema a rich intellectual background from the theater. His most poetic film was *Anastasia Passed By/ Gently Was Anastasia Passing* (*Duios Anastasia trecea*, 1980), adapted by Dumitru Radu Popescu, one of the leading figures of contemporary Romanian literature, from his own novella. It is a version of Sophocles' *Antigone*, set in a Nazi-occupied Danubian village, where a young schoolteacher defies a German edict not to bury a Serbian partisan at the cost of her life. Tatos followed *Anastasia* with *Sequence* (*Secvente*, 1982), his most experimental film, which offers three original "short stories" in film about the relationship among cinematic illusion, history, and the quotidian real.

From a virtually nonexistent material base in the late 1940s, Romanian cinema in the 1980s grew into one of the more viable in Eastern Europe. In the early 1970s, the film industry was decentralized and the production of feature films split into five groups, according to the Polish model. Between 1978 and 1989, these groups produced an average of 30 features annually, with a high of 36 in 1984. (Furthermore, from 1971 through 1989, the Romanian TV Film Studio, under the leadership of Victoria Marinescu, produced or co-produced with the film industry 15 serials, 40 long- and medium-length features, 30 cartoons, and 562 medium- and short-length documentaries or musicals, all in color.) Under communism, the Romanian industry was more completely self-financed than any in the Eastern bloc, and domestic box-office success was crucial to its survival. In a still-developing country of 20.1 million people, it is no small accomplishment that between 1979 and the 1989 revolution, more than one-third of all admissions in the nation's nearly 300 theaters were for domestic films of an often high aesthetic and intellectual caliber.

The violent overthrow of the Ceauşescu dictatorship in December 1989 placed the country in the hands of the National Salvation Front (FSN), whose leader, Ion Iliescu, was elected president in 1990. Iliescu attempted to move Romania toward a free-market economy but left the authoritarian Communist infrastructure partly intact, including the dreaded *securitate* (secret police).

When students and intellectuals staged a fifty-three-day anticommunist street demonstration in

Bucharest's University Square from April 23 to June 15, 1990, they were savagely attacked and routed by "coal miners" called in from the provinces and coached by *securitate* agents. Iliescu denied any complicity in the rampage, but Stere Gulea's feature-length compilation documentary *University Square* (1991), produced by Lucian Pintilie with funds from the Ministry of Culture, makes it clear that the government orchestrated the whole thing. Despite frantic attempts to suppress it, this film set a record for documentary attendance in Romania (where it provoked further rioting) and won several international awards, and Stere Gulea (b. 1943) was subsequently named head of the Institute of Theater and Film and, later still, director of the National Film Office.

Although Ceauşescu's megalomaniacal scheme to rebuild Romania through "systematization" left the nation nearly bankrupt, foreign capital eventually enabled the production of a handful of important Romanian features. These include Lucian Pintile's *The Oak* (1992), a satire about Romania under Ceauşescu; Stere Gulea's *Fox Hunter* (1992), a study of the psychology of a *securitate* agent and his wife; Mircea Daneliuc's antiauthoritarian parables *The Eleventh Commandment* (1992) and *The Conjugal Bed* (1993); and Dan Piţa's *Hotel de Lux* (1992), a gloomy meditation on dictatorship. American companies, such as Full Moon Entertainment, have also set up in post-Ceauşescu Romania to cash in on its relatively low production costs.

More recently, Castel Film, with four fully equipped soundstages, became the largest full-service private studio in Romania; although it mainly caters to American and French companies, it stimulates the industry indirectly by employing local talent. In 1997, the government created the National Cinematographic Office (Oficiul National al Cinematografiei, or ONC) to replace the old National Cinema Center and help reform the industry along free-market lines.

The most recent promise for Romanian cinema lies in what has been called "the New Wave on the Black Sea," announced in 2005 with Cristi Puiu's *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu*, which won the Un Certain Regard prize at Cannes for the Best Sidebar Program. The following year, Corneliu Porumboiu's *12:08 East of Bucharest*, which dealt with the revolution of 1989, won the Caméra d'Or, given to the Best Debut Feature.

This was followed the next year by Cristian Mungiu's harrowing feature *4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days*, about a woman seeking an illegal abortion in the last years of the Ceauşescu regime, which was awarded Cannes' highest prize, the Palme d'Or. Earlier, Cristian Nemescu's *California Dreamin'* won the Un Certain Regard prize. Winning four major prizes at the world's most prestigious film festival during a period of three years has led some critics to speculate that Romanian cinema is entering a new "Golden Age." That this promise has been kept is underscored by international acclaim for Andrei Ujica's three-hour documentary *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceauşescu* (2010) and Cristi Puiu's self-reflexive *Three Exercises in Interpretation* (2013).

Other Balkan Cinemas

Two other Balkan countries with evolving film industries are Turkey (population 76.97 million) and Greece (population 11.1 million). The Turkish industry is large but erratic and geared mainly to the production of domestic exploitation films. Mainstream commercial cinema is closely associated with Yesilcam, the street in Istanbul where most film companies have their offices. (*Yesilcam* literally means "green pine," or metaphorically, "Hollywood.") Nevertheless, Turkey has produced several filmmakers of great talent and at least one of legendary prominence since World War II. This was Yilmaz Güney (1937–1984), a former matinee idol who began directing his own scripts in the late 1960s, and in the 1970s produced a significant body of politically motivated work focused on the everyday poverty and oppression of his people. Güney was arrested twice on political charges and imprisoned intermittently from 1972 to 1981, but continued to produce films from jail under the auspices of his colleagues Zeki Okten (1941–2009) and Serif Gören (b. 1944). He escaped from prison in 1981, just in time to edit his extraordinary masterpiece *Yol* (*The Way*; Serif Gören, 1982), a relentless indictment of Turkey's patriarchal system of values, which shared the Palme d'Or Award at Cannes with Costa-Gavras's *Missing*. Güney directed one last film—*Le mur* (*The Wall*, 1983; France), based on a brutally repressed prison revolt that occurred in Ankara in 1976—before his death in Paris in 1984 from stomach cancer.

Because Greece was involved in a bloody civil war for four years after the end of World War II, the film industry did not revive until the 1950s, when the output fluctuated between fifteen and thirty features per year, many of them broad comedies or so-called



Nikos Poursanidis and Alexandra Aidini in *Trilogy: The Weeping Meadow (Trilogia: To livadi pou dakryzei*; Theodoros Angelopoulos, 2004), a film that follows a Greek family of refugees in the aftermath of World War II.

foustanelas, patriotic action films named after the traditional Greek male kilt. In 1951, the Lycourgos Stavarkos Film School was established in Athens, and most Greek filmmakers of the 1950s and 1960s received some training there. But a truly national film culture did not emerged until after the Colonels' coup of April 21, 1967, when the junta's attempts to stifle social change produced a cinema far more radical than anything Greece had experienced to date. Its founder and leader was Theodoros (Theo) Angelopoulos (1935–2012). His first features were fairly direct critiques of the social system, but his later works—*The Travelling Players* (*O thiasos*, 1975) and *The Hunters* (*Oi kynigoi*, 1977)—were formally complex, multilayered tapestries consolidating his mature style of achronological narrative and extremely long, Jancsó-like takes. During the 1980s, Angelopoulos produced a series of densely demanding and, ultimately, mysterious films—for example, *Alexander the Great* (*O Megalexandros,* 1980), *The Beekeeper* (*O melissokomos*, 1986), and *Landscape in the Mist* (*Topio stin omichli*, 1988)—that placed him among the ranks of such world-class directors as Tarkovksy, Mizoguchi, and Ozu, not to mention Antonioni. This was most apparent in his two films of the 1990s that brought great prestige to Greek cinema—*Ulysses' Gaze* (*To vlemma tou Odyssea*, 1995), which won the Grand Jury Prize at Cannes; and *Eternity and a Day* (*Mia aioniotita kai mia mera,* 1998), which won the Palme d'Or for Best Film at Cannes—both spellbinding works about metaphysical journeys and the relationship among memory, history, and time in a uniquely Balkan setting. As his crowning work, Angelopoulos planned a trilogy on modern Greek history, but completed just two award-winning films before his death in 2012—*Trilogy: The Weeping Meadow* (*Trilogia: To livadi pou dakryzei*, 2004) and *The Dust of Time* (*Trilogia II: I skoni tou hronou*, 2008).

The Importance of Eastern European Cinema

As Lenin had predicted in 1917, for Eastern Europeans, film became "the most important art." It helped support their revolutions and transform their societies, and it managed to attain for itself a sophistication of form unparalleled in any other part of the world. The reasons are many, but two stand out clearly. Culturally, the countries of Eastern Europe have always had an affinity for the kind of sensuous thinking that produces great films and creates new cinematic languages. Their apprehension of art forms has historically been at once abstract and concretely structural.

It is no coincidence that the same milieu that produced Franz Kafka, Karel Capek, Eugène Ionesco, and Stanislaw Lem also produced Věra Chytilová, Jan Němec, and Miklós Jancsó, for all of these artists fuse romanticism and cynicism into a strong sense of existential absurdity. Second, the countries of Eastern Europe have been plundered, colonized, occupied, and otherwise oppressed for most of their histories. In periods of great social and political oppression, art often provides the only means of self-expression a culture can attain. And film art—"the most important art"—traditionally served this function in Eastern Europe.

As proof, one has only to note the correlation between periods of political turbulence and great achievement in Eastern European film: Poland, 1954–1963; Czechoslovakia, 1963–1968; and, most recently, the Soviet Union, 1985–1991.

When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 and the USSR disbanded in 1991, communism in this part of the world unraveled. Yet the euphoria that greeted the coming of freedom to the former Warsaw Pact nations and Soviet republics was soon followed by the sober realization that, separately, their economies and their relatively small populations could not support the surplus production of their industries—especially their film industries. Under communism, filmmaking, distribution, and exhibition had been privileged activities, heavily protected from foreign competition and subsidized by the state. Under capitalism, it looked as if Eastern Europe's "most important art" might soon become its least—in the sense that film was no longer an instrument of ideology, policy, or national expression, but just another commodity to be traded on the open market.

In most cases, however, after a decade of uncertainty and turbulence, the newly democratic states of Eastern Europe promulgated laws that provided partial subsidies for worthy projects. These subsidies, combined with co-production deals with state television and international partners, enabled the film industries of most of these nations to first survive and then prosper, on a somewhat reduced scale.



Irma Raush and Anatoly Solonitsyn in *Andrei Rublev* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1966).



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The Former Soviet Union

The Soviet Union, whose political and military presence loomed so large over the other countries discussed in the previous chapter until its dissolution in 1991, also produced some remarkably distinguished cinema after World War II. Yet before this could occur, the country went through a period of Stalinist repression even darker than that experienced by its satellites. During the war itself, the film industry had been evacuated to Central Asia, with the largest studios (Mosfilm and Lenfilm) and the VGIK relocated to Alma-Ata in Kazakhstan. Here were produced such morale-boosting wartime films as Sergei and Georgi Vasiliev's *The Defense of Tsaritsyn* (*Oborona Tsaritsyna*, 1942), Friedrich Ermler's *She Defends the Motherland* (*Ona zashchishchaet rodinu*, 1943; distributed in the United States as *No Greater Love*), and most prominently, Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible, Part I* (1945) and *Part II* (1946).

Regional studios in other Central Asian cities (Tashkent, Ashkhabad, and Stalinabad) and the Caucasus (Tbilisi, Baku, and Erevan) assumed new importance in the production of features at this time, while documentary cameramen at the front gathered footage for Moscow-produced compilation films. Although the mission of Soviet cinema during the war was overtly propagandist, its films were more realistic than any others made under Stalin before or after the war.



Mikheil Gelovani as Stalin in *The Defense of Tsaritsyn* (*Oborona Tsaritsyna*; Sergei and Georgi Vasiliev, 1942).

From 1934 onward, the supreme arbiter of socialist realism had been Andrei A. Zhdanov (1896–1948), secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Stalin's chief lieutenant in the Politburo. As party boss in charge of ideological affairs, Zhdanov's mission was to correct "aberrant" tendencies in Soviet art, especially as represented in the cinema by the avant-garde heritage of Vertov, Kuleshov, Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Dovzhenko, which he set out systematically to discredit and destroy.

In 1946, as part of a national crusade to "reestablish ideological conformity in the arts" (which had necessarily been relaxed during the war), Zhdanov embarked on a course that nearly destroyed the Soviet film industry as a functioning entity. First came a dramatic decree from the Central Committee banning four current films and sharply warning the industry to reform itself. Then a thinly veiled campaign of anti-Semitism was unleashed against "rootless cosmopolitanism" and "foreign influences" in the arts, followed by personal attacks on individual filmmakers, such as Leonid Trauberg, in *Pravda*.

In the wake of such intimidation, only a handful of films were produced between 1948 and 1952, and the Central Committee demanded that two themes be portrayed in all of them: (1) that the CPSU was the motivating force in all Soviet activities, foreign and domestic; and (2) that Stalin was personally involved in all decisions of consequence for the USSR, past and present. This latter dictate resulted in a virtual genre of what were called "artistic documentaries" (we would now call them "docudramas")—pseudo-historical epics deifying Stalin as the greatest ideologist, economic planner, and military strategist in recorded history (though a kindly, avuncular man of the people as well). Stalin had been heroically portrayed in Soviet films many times previously, but these new films almost literally proposed Stalin to be a god.

They combined documentary footage with fictional scenes to portray a charismatic Stalin (usually played by Mikheil Gelovani, a handsome look-alike who made a career of the part) carrying forth Lenin's putative mandate to develop the Soviet economy through a series of five-year plans (Mikheil Chiaureli's *The Vow* [*Kliatva*, 1946]), personally directing brilliant military offensives (Chiaureli's *The Fall of Berlin* [*Padenie Berlina*, 1949; released 1950]), and crushing an anti-Bolshevik rebellion in Leningrad (Chiaureli's *The Unforgettable Year 1919* [*Nezabyvaemyi 1919-yi god*, 1951; released 1952]). As film theorist André Bazin wrote in "The Stalin Myth in Soviet Cinema" (1950), Stalin becomes in these films "History incarnate . . . omniscient, infallible, irresistible. . . ." It was a strange detour for a revolutionary cinema founded on the rejection of conventional narrative and individual heroes.

The "artistic documentaries" (most of which, with perfectly paranoid circularity, received the Stalin Prize for Artistic Merit) were in fact part of a larger propaganda effort to establish Stalin as a mythic figure in Soviet politics and culture that was undertaken in the last terror-filled years of his reign. To ensure this priority, the party in 1951 decreed that the film industry should produce "only masterpieces," to be directed only by "acknowledged masters of the art." The result was that by 1952, annual output had fallen to a record low of five features and no new graduates could be admitted to the industry from the VGIK (Soviet film workers later referred to this period as "the time of few films" or *malokartinie*).

Cinema during the Khrushchev Thaw

Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, caused an immediate loosening of ideological criteria, and 1954 witnessed the production of forty Soviet features. Yet it was not until Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971) became first secretary of the Central Committee and denounced Stalin's brutal despotism in his famous "secret speech"



The Cranes Are Flying (*Letiat zhuravli*; Mikhail Kalatozov, 1957).

before the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956 that the de-Stalinization process began in earnest, and he roundly indicted Stalin's promulgation of a "cult of personality" through film.

More striking still, perhaps, was his assertion that Stalin had lost touch with the reality of his country as he rose to power and that he eventually knew it only through the pseudo-realistic film images mandated by his own cultural bureaucracy: "He knew the country and agriculture only from films. And these films had dressed up and beautified the existing situation. . . . Many films so pictured *kolkhoz* (farm) life that the tables were bending from the weight of turkeys and geese. Evidently, Stalin thought it was actually so."

It is important to understand, however, that although Stalin was officially discredited, Zhdanov was not, and socialist realism as a doctrine was not then and never was officially rescinded (although it was unanimously rejected by a vote of the Filmmakers Union in June 1990, shortly before the collapse of the Soviet state). It was simply interpreted with greater moderation than previously from time to time.

The Khrushchev regime's more flexible attitude toward the arts (initially, at least) produced a thaw in the Soviet film industry that started dramatically in 1956. In that year new films began to appear from recent graduates of the VGIK for the first time since the 1930s, many of which had contemporary themes, most prominently, Mikhail Kalatozov's (1903–1973) *The Cranes Are Flying* (*Letiat zhuravli*, 1957).

When Kalatozov's film won the Grand Prix at Cannes in 1958, it announced to the world that some sort of revival was taking place within Soviet cinema. Just over a year earlier, however, Soviet tanks had brutally crushed the Hungarian revolution, and this had produced a chilling effect on domestic culture. For a while, the



Luz María Collazo in *I Am Cuba* (*Ia Kuba*; Mikhail Kalatozov, 1964).

safest subjects for films became literary adaptations, and the late 1950s witnessed a glut of them, especially among directors of an older generation—for example, Sergei Gerasimov's (1907–1985) three-part version of Mikhail Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don* (*Tikhii Don*, 1957) and Iosif Kheifits's (1905–1995) adaptation from Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog* (*Dama s sobachkoi*, 1960).

Yet Khrushchev was not Stalin, and advances in the industry continued to be made under his regime: by 1958, the annual output had reached 115 features, of which one-third were in color (introduced to the Soviet mainstream in 1950); in 1959, the Moscow International Film Festival was inaugurated on a regular biennial basis; and perhaps most significant, production was either renewed or begun on a full-time basis in all of the non-Russian republics in the period 1955–1965.

Furthermore, the bolder Soviet filmmakers continued to test the waters of social comment during this time, with such works as Grigori Chukhrai's (1921–2001) internationally acclaimed *Ballad of a Soldier* (*Ballada o soldate*, 1958), a prizewinner at Cannes and San Francisco; Kalatozov and cinematographer Sergei Urusevsky's (1908–1974) *Letter Never Sent* (*Neotpravlennoe pismo*, 1960) and *I Am Cuba* (*Ia Kuba*, 1964), a fantastic two-and-one-half-hour propaganda epic scripted by Evgeny Yevtushenko that was released in the United States in 1995; and most striking, Marlen Khutsiev's (b. 1925) *Lenin's Guard* (also known as *Ilich Square* [*Zastava Ilicha*]), produced in 1962, which provoked a storm of official outrage and had to be reshot as *I Am Twenty* (*Mne dvadtsat let*, released 1964) during the next eighteen months.

In December 1962, Khrushchev announced that liberalism in the arts had gone too far, and he issued a stinging indictment of Soviet modernist painting on the occasion of the exhibition "Thirty Years of Pictorial Art in Moscow." This was followed by party-line attacks on *Letter Never Sent*, making it clear that the basic tenets of socialist realism hadn't changed a bit. Caution immediately became the industry watchword.

In October 1964, Khrushchev was removed from office by a conspiracy among his deputies, and a duumvirate was installed consisting of Leonid Brezhnev (1906–1982) and Alexei N. Kosygin (1904–1980) as first secretary of the Central Committee and chairman of the Council of Ministers, respectively. (Brezhnev became general secretary in 1966, and ultimately he superseded all of his comrades to become supreme leader of the country, a position he held until his death.) There followed a period of uncertainty and indecision for the arts that ended abruptly with the Warsaw Pact occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and a

renewed domestic campaign against the liberalization of Soviet culture in 1969. Appropriately, however, the brief period of the Khrushchev thaw ended with the production of one of the most extraordinary and beautiful films ever made: Sergei Parajanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (*Teni zabytykh predkov*, 1964).

Sergei Parajanov and *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*

There was little in Sergei Parajanov's (1924–1990) early career to announce the remarkable sensibility displayed in *Shadows*. Born Sarkis Paradjanian (his name was later transliterated and "Russified") to Armenian parents in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi, he studied at the Kiev Conservatory of Music during World War II and then attended the VGIK. Parajanov graduated from the Directing Department in 1951 and was assigned to the Dovzhenko Kiev Studio, where he made five Ukrainian-language films for regional consumption—all of them indifferent, by his own account—before undertaking the project that became *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*.

Adapted by Parajanov and Ivan Chendei from a prerevolutionary novelette by the distinguished Ukrainian writer Mykhailo Kotsyubynsky to celebrate the centennial of his birth, the film retells an ancient Carpathian folk legend of universal resonance. Deep in the Carpathian Mountains, at the westernmost reach of the Ukraine, a young man (Ivan) and a young woman (Marichka) become lovers, despite a blood feud between their families. Marichka accidentally drowns one night searching for Ivan, and after a long period of bereavement, he marries another (Palagna). Yet Ivan is persistently haunted by the image of his first love and eventually chooses to join her in death.

Like the legends of Tristan and Isolde, and Romeo and Juliet, *Shadows* offers a relatively familiar and uncomplicated tale of undying love that has variants in cultures all over the world. In the telling of the tale, however, Parajanov created a vision of human experience so radical and unique as to subvert all authority. To say that *Shadows* violates every narrative code and representational system known to cinema is an understatement—at times, in fact, the film seems intent on deconstructing the very process of representation itself. Yet the camera and editing techniques in *Shadows* are all part of Parajanov's deliberate aesthetic strategy to interrogate a whole set of historically evolved assumptions about the nature of cinematic space and the relationship between the spectator and the screen.

Parajanov proceeds by means of perceptual dislocation so that it becomes impossible at any given moment to imagine a stable time-space continuum for the dramatic action. Often, for example, the viewer will be invited to share a point of view that is suddenly ruptured by some disjunction in spatial logic: spaces that appear to be contiguous in one shot sequence are revealed to be miles apart in the next, and surfaces that seem to be two-dimensional at the beginning of a shot will become richly textured in process by focal manipulation. Sometimes a shot will begin with a camera angle that encourages the viewer to misconstrue narrative space, as when a wall is momentarily made to resemble the surface of a roof. At other times, the camera assumes perspectives and executes maneuvers that appear to be physically, as well as dramatically, impossible: the camera looks down from the top of a falling tree several hundred feet tall; it looks up through a pool with no optical distortion as Ivan drinks from its surface; it whirls 360 degrees on its axis for nearly a full minute, dissolving focus and color to abstraction; and it turns corners and swoops down embankments with inhuman speed.

Finally, Parajanov and his cinematographer, Iuri Ilyenko (1936–2010), use a variety of lenses, including



Tatyana Bestayeva in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (*Teni zabytykh predkov*; Sergei Parajanov, 1964).

telephoto zoom and 180-degree wide angle, or "fish-eye," to warp the film's scenographic space to the outer limits of narrative comprehension—but never quite beyond it.

The point of these techniques is not to confuse the spectator, but to prevent the kind of comfortable, familiar, and logically continuous representational space associated with traditional narrative form. The reason is simply that the film posits a world that is neither comfortable, familiar, nor logically continuous, for *Shadows* exists most fully not in the realm of narrative, but in the worlds of myth and the unconscious. It is above all else a deeply psychological film, rich in both Freudian and Jungian imagery, and one whose sophistication makes the Pavlovian tactics of Eisenstein's montage seem almost primitive by comparison.

Shadows's psychological subtlety extends to its use of sound and color. It has been frequently noted that the film has an operatic, pageantlike quality, and Parajanov uses a complex variety of music—from atonal electronics to lush orchestral romanticism, to hieratic religious chants, to vocal and instrumental folk music—to create leitmotifs for the film's various psychological atmospheres. Similarly, Parajanov employs color in a psychologically provocative way, having developed for *Shadows* what he called a "dramaturgy of color."

When Ivan and Marichka are first drawn together as children, for example, the prevailing color is the white of the snow, corresponding to their innocence; the green of spring dominates their young love; monochrome and sepia tones are used to drain the world of color during the period of Ivan's grieving; but color returns riotously, if briefly, after he meets Palagna; as that relationship turns barren, the film is dominated by autumnal hues; monochrome returns during Ivan's death delirium; and at the moment of his death the natural universe is painted in surreal shades of red and blue. The ultimate effect of both the sound track and the color system, like that of the film's optical distortions and dislocations, is to destabilize the spectator perceptually, and therefore psychologically, in



The Legend of Suram Fortress (*Legenda Suramskoi kreposti*; Sergei Parajanov, 1985).

order to present a tale that operates at the level not of narrative but of myth, a tale that is an archetype of life itself: youth passes from innocence to experience to solitude and death in a recurring cycle, eons upon eons. This is the "shadow" of "forgotten ancestors": the archetypal pattern that outlasts and transcends individual identity.

When *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* appeared in the West in 1965, it was immediately recognized that Soviet cinema had acquired a new genius on the order of Eisenstein and Dovzhenko. The film won sixteen foreign festival awards and was released in the United States and Europe to wide critical acclaim. Rarely since the triumph of *Battleship Potemkin*, in fact, had a Soviet motion picture enjoyed such international esteem. At home, however, the cultural situation had already begun to take its next nasty turn—*Shadows* was variously accused of "formalism" and "Ukrainian nationalism," and it was deliberately under-booked in domestic theaters by officials of Goskino. Parajanov found himself personally attacked by the party secretary for "ideological problems."

During the next ten years, Parajanov went on to write ten complete scenarios based on classical Russian literature and folk epics, all of which he was refused permission to shoot by Soviet authorities. He did make one more film—a visionary life of the Armenian poet Arutin Sayadyan (1712–1795), titled *The Color of Pomegranates* (*Sayat-Nova*)—which was banned on its release in 1969 and finally given limited distribution in a version "re-edited" by Sergei Yutkevich in the early 1970s.

Then, while he was working on an adaptation of some fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen for Soviet television in January 1974, Parajanov was arrested on a variety of specious charges and sentenced to six years at hard labor in the Gulag. An international petition campaign motivated the Soviets to release him in late 1977, but he was not allowed to work in the film industry again until 1984, when he was exonerated and assigned to Georgia's Gruziafilm Studios.

Parajanov's first film there, *The Legend of Suram Fortress* (*Legenda Suramskoi kreposti*, 1985), co-directed with Dodo (David) Abashidze, was a return to the mythopoetic mode of *Shadows* that showed his remarkable cinematic sensibilities to be still very much intact, as did *Arabesques on Themes from Pirosmani* (*Arabeski na temu Pirosmani*, 1986), a documentary short on the work of the famous Georgian "primitive" painter. Similarly, *Asik Kerib* (1988), by Gruziafilm, a folklore-based adaptation of a Lermontov tale shot on location in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, abounds in the ritualized tableaux and magical invention of Parajanov's earlier work. He died on July 21, 1990, in Yerevan, Armenia, of cancer.

Cinema under Brezhnev

What happened to Parajanov during the Brezhnev years was extreme. More typical was the plight of Andrei Tarkovsky (1932–1986), the second major figure to emerge from postwar Soviet cinema during the 1960s. His first feature, *Ivan's Childhood* (also known as *My Name Is Ivan*), which began his long collaboration with cinematographer Vadim Yusov and composer Viacheslav Ovchinnikov, won the Golden Lion at Venice in 1962. In content, this story of a heroic young orphan who becomes a frontline spy for the Soviet army during World War II follows the traditional pattern. Yet in terms of form, *Ivan's Childhood* approaches the avant-garde in its surreal rendition of the horrors of war.

Tarkovsky's next film, *Andrei Rublev* (1966), from a script by Andrei Konchalovsky, produced an official scandal. The title character is a historical figure, the Russian Orthodox monk who brought the art of religious icon painting to its zenith in the fifteenth century. Tarkovsky used Rublev's life, reconstructed in loosely connected episodes, to symbolize the conflict between Russian barbarism and idealism. The film was banned in the Soviet Union on the grounds that it gave an inaccurate (that is, negative) account of medieval Russian history, although an edited version won the International Critics Award at Cannes in 1969, and *Rublev* was ultimately given limited domestic release in a version further re-edited and cut by forty minutes.

Tarkovsky's third feature was the metaphysical science fiction film *Solaris* (*Solyaris*, 1972), adapted



Donatas Banionis and Natalya Bondarchuk in *Solaris* (*Solyaris*; Andrei Tarkovsky, 1972).



Domiziana Giordano and Oleg Yankovsky in *Nostalgia* (*Nostalghia*; Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983).

from a novel by the Polish writer Stanislaw Lem, which he conceived as a response to Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). *Solaris* won the Special Jury Prize at Cannes in 1972 and was uncontroversial at home. Yet his autobiographical *Mirror* (*Zerkalo*, 1974) was much criticized for its labyrinthine structure and parabolic style; it was not suppressed, but neither was it offered for export until 1980.

After directing an acclaimed stage version of *Hamlet* in Moscow in 1976, Tarkovsky made *Stalker* (1979), a complex allegory of decay shot in Estonia and interpreted by many European critics as an indictment of the Soviet government's repression of intellectual freedom. In this gloomy film, a writer and a scientist are led by "the Stalker" on a journey through a wasteland-like "Zone" to a "Room" where all wishes may be fulfilled, but they fail in their quest through lack of will. By this point, Tarkovsky had acquired an international reputation as the Soviet Union's most unorthodox filmmaker, and he soon became one of the few Soviet directors in many years to work outside of the country with official sanction.

In 1982, Tarkovsky began shooting *Nostalgia* (*Nostalghia*, 1983) in Italy for Gaumont and RAI, with Soviet cooperation. Scripted by Tonino Guerra, a frequent collaborator of Fellini, Antonioni, and Francesco Rosi, *Nostalgia* portrays the memories, dreams, and waking experience of a Russian professor of architecture who has come to Italy for the first time, accompanied by a female interpreter who is a Botticelli-like beauty. It is perhaps Tarkovsky's most mysterious and inaccessible film, but it was a great success at Cannes in 1983, where it shared a specially created Best Direction Award with Robert Bresson's *L'argent* and also received the International Critics Award.

Largely on the strength of such prestige, Tarkovsky continued working outside of the Soviet Union, completing the international co-production *The Sacrifice* (*Offret,* 1986) in Sweden. Shot on location by the great cinematographer Sven Nykvist, this visionary

work concerns the spiritual response of a small group of people on an isolated Baltic island to an imminent nuclear holocaust, and it won multiple international awards, including five at Cannes alone. Since *Andrei Rublev*, Tarkovsky had won his creative freedom by remaining politically ambiguous, yet to many Western observers even his films made abroad bore the marks of careful, covert Soviet censorship. Fittingly, *The Sacrifice* showed no signs of reticence in providing a compendium of Tarkovsky's lifelong themes and symbols. It was his last film; he died of lung cancer in Paris in December 1986.

A middle path is suggested by the work of Andrei Mikhalkov Konchalovsky. Konchalovsky was born in 1937, a member of the Soviet artistic elite. His grandfather and great-grandfather were both famous painters; his mother and father were well-known writers (the latter having served as president of the Writers Union and written the words to the national anthem); and his brother is the talented actor-director Nikita Mikhalkov (b. 1945). Konchalovsky's first film as a director, *The First Teacher* (*Pervii uchitel*, 1965), was a revisionist account of the conflict between revolutionary idealism and tradition in the Kirghiz Mountains in the wake of October 1917, and it raised some eyebrows in official circles.

Moreover, his second film, *Asya's Happiness* (*Asino schasté*, 1966), was so critical of the poverty and backwardness of Soviet collective farms that it was damned and banned until 1987. (The public "damning" of films by party critics began in 1965, when Aleksandr Alov and Vladimir Naumov's version of Dostoevsky's *Bad Joke* [*Skvernyi anekdot*] was pilloried; the practice continued for several years.) So Konchalovsky prudently turned to the classics with subtle adaptations of Turgenev's *A Nest of Gentlefolk* (*Dvorianskoe gnezdo*, 1969) and Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* (*Diadia Vania*, 1971).

Then he wrote some scripts for regional studios and directed the safely conformist modern musical romance *In Love* (*Vliublonnye*, 1974), before making the monumental *Siberiad/Sibiriana* (*Sibiriada*, 1979), which traces the histories of two Siberian families over a period of three generations from the revolution to modern times. Widely regarded as the Soviet Union's greatest postwar epic, *Siberiad* was both a popular



Siberiad/Sibiriana (*Sibiriada*; Andrei Konchalovsky, 1979).

success at home and winner of the Special Jury Prize at Cannes in the year of its release.

In 1980, Soviet authorities allowed Konchalovsky to emigrate to the United States (with the very rare option of returning in the government's good graces), where he made the downbeat, noncommercial *Maria's Lovers* (1983; released 1985) and *Runaway Train* (1985; screenplay by Akira Kurosawa) for the Cannon Group, which latter became a box-office and critical hit. In 1991, Konchalovsky directed *The Inner Circle*, a film about life under Stalin as seen through the eyes of his lowly projectionist, based on a true story and shot on location in Moscow.

The various fates of Parajanov, Tarkovsky, and Konchalovsky notwithstanding, most Soviet directors remained at home in the post-Khrushchev era and adapted to the policy articulated by the new head of the State Committee on Cinematography, Fillip Ermash, in his 1972 "Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU":

> There are too many grey, formless works in which contemporary and historical themes are worked in a superficial manner, not finding any reflection of a fundamental social change taking place in Soviet society. . . . Persistent thematic planning will make possible the creation of films which will center on the positive hero of our time—man, for whom the struggle for the embodiment of the Communist ideal becomes the personal aim of his existence.

Clearly reminiscent of socialist realism, this new "pedagogic line," in fact, permitted greater technical innovation and complexity of expression. Typically, it was from the cinemas of the non-Russian republics, where a concentration on regional themes was tolerated and even encouraged, that some of the most extraordinary talent emerged in the 1970s and the 1980s.

Cinema of the Non-Russian Republics

Historically, the Soviet industry was structured around national studios in each of the fifteen autonomous republics, as well as five other studios specializing in the production of children's and youth films, documentary films, educational films, industrial films, and animated features. Filmmakers were trained in their specialty at the VGIK in Moscow and then sent out to work in one of the twenty regional or specialized studios, which by the early 1990s averaged a total of 150 theatrical features, plus 80 to 90 telefilms, per year.

Despite the strong central control of Goskino, the State Committee on Cinematography in Moscow, and the economic dominance of the Russian studios Mosfilm and Lenfilm, each of the national studios produced a cinema with its own ethnic, cultural, and linguistic traditions. Overdubbed in Russian, films from all fifteen republics were distributed to cinemas throughout the Soviet Union. (Even Russian films were overdubbed, because post-synchronization of dialogue was the standard production practice throughout the USSR.)

Conventionally, the cinemas of the fifteen republics were grouped into five categories, in terms of both geographical criteria and production/support structures. The strongest, oldest, and most prominent of these categories was Slavic cinema—that of Russia (emanating from the Mosfilm [Moscow] and Lenfilm [Leningrad] studios), Belorussia (from Belarusfilm [Minsk]), and Ukraine (from the Dovzhenko Kiev Studio and the Odessafilm and Yaltafilm studios)—which accounted for about one-half of overall annual production and will be considered later in this chapter.

Baltic cinema (Lithuanian Film Studio [Vilnius], Riga Film Studio [Latvia], and Tallinnfilm [Estonia]) and Moldavian cinema (Moldova-Film [Kishinev]) both took their first steps in the postwar era and are culturally and linguistically distinct from each other and from the cinemas of the other republics; they were together responsible for about one-eighth of annual Soviet production.

Transcaucasian cinema (Gruziafilm [Tbilisi], Armenfilm [Yerevan], and Azerbaijanfilm [Baku]), representing distinct cultures that exist in close proximity, and Central Asian cinema (Uzbekfilm [Tashkent], Kazakhfilm [Alma-Ata], Kirghizfilm [Bishkek; formerly Frunze], Tadjikfilm [Dushanbe], and Turkmenfilm [Ashkhabad]), which shares a collective heritage of Islam, accounted together for approximately one-fourth of the industry's yearly output. The remaining one-eighth came from such specialized studios as the Moscow-based Gorki Film Studio (children's/youth films) and Soiuzmultfilm (animation).

Baltic Cinema

Lithuania

Of the Baltic cinemas, that of Lithuania (population 3.7 million) is the most prominent. The Lithuanian Film Studio was founded in 1949 but did not produce distinctive work until the 1960s, when Vitautas

Zalakiavicius (1930–1996) made *The Chronicle of One Day* (1964) and *Nobody Wanted to Die* (*Nikto ne khotel umirat*, 1965), the latter a politically charged and violent tale of guerrilla warfare between the KGB and anticommunist partisans after World War II. (The Soviets annexed Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in 1940, and the Nazis occupied all three from 1941 to 1944, after which they were recaptured by the USSR. In both Lithuania and Latvia, nationalist guerrillas who had resisted the Nazis fought on against the Soviets in struggles that lasted until 1952 and 1948, respectively, and produced many casualties.)

In the 1980s, the poetically stylized work of Algimantas Puipa (b. 1951) began to appear, and his *A Woman and Her Four Men* (*Zhenshchina i chetvero ee muzhchin*, 1983) won acclaim at several international festivals. This adaptation of a nineteenth-century Danish novel, relocated to the Lithuanian coast, pits a family of peasant fishermen against an extreme physical and political environment, representing the contemporary situation in the Soviet Union.

In the era of glasnost—the new "openness" promoted by Mikhail Gorbachev after his succession to the party Secretariat in 1985—Puipa's films grew increasingly direct in their nationalism and experimental in form. *Ticket to Taj Mahal* (*Biletas iki Taj Mahal*, 1991; produced by the Katarsis Film Cooperative, Kazakhstan) is Puipa's most complex work, a blending of historical reconstruction and fantasy set during the postwar partisan struggle with the Soviets, which suggests that the only way to escape some forms of political oppression is in our dreams.

The appearance of films with overt anti-Soviet content coincided with Lithuania's declaration of independence on March 11, 1990. (Latvia and Estonia declared their independence in August 1991, a week after the aborted coup in Moscow.) Jonas Vaitkus's *Awakening* (*Probuzhdeniye*, 1990) was adapted from an agitational stage play about the fate of individuals caught up in the political terror following the Soviet annexation in 1940. Similar in theme is *The Children from Hotel "America"* (Raimundas Banionis, 1990), based on a true incident that occurred in 1972 in Kaunas, Lithuania's historical capital, when some teenagers tried to re-create a Woodstock-style rock festival and were brutalized by the KGB.

Yet perhaps the most disturbing film to come from Lithuania is the haunting documentary *Homecoming* (Petras Abukevicius, 1990), recounting the secret deportation and genocide of nearly one-quarter of Lithuania's population in Stalin's Gulag concentration camps, 1940–1941 and 1944, and the survivors' retrieval of their loved ones' remains at the expense of the Soviet state, a policy introduced by Gorbachev during the period of glasnost preceding the dissolution of the USSR.

After liberation, Lithuania had to struggle to keep its film industry alive. Among other problems, it did not have access to the various European film funds because it was not a member of the European Community. In 2001, Lithuania joined with Latvia and Estonia to create a joint distribution venture called Baltic Films.

Latvia

The film industries of Latvia (population 2.4 million) and Estonia (population 1.4 million) are considerably smaller than Lithuania's but significant nonetheless. Under Soviet domination, Latvia's Riga Film Studio produced ten to twelve features a year and was well known for its detective films, children's films, and documentaries.

In fact, it was the glasnost-era documentary *Is It Easy to Be Young?* (*Legko li byt molodym?*; Juris Podnieks, 1987) that first focused world attention on the plight of the Baltic nations under Soviet rule. In *cinéma vérité* fashion, the film follows a variety of Latvian young people during a two-year period as they seek to give some shape and direction to their lives within the rigid constraints of the communist system, and it became the model for a number of disillusioned Soviet youth films of the late 1980s. Stylistically expressive and technically inventive, *Is It Easy to Be Young?* ultimately conveys a sense of hopelessness and futility, especially with regard to the poisonous effect of the Afghan war on Soviet youths and society generally (one of the few clear choices open to young men in the late Soviet era was to join the army and go to Afghanistan—many of the youths at the film's conclusion are shown to have become disabled veterans of that war).

Since 1990, Latvia's production system has been restructured under the umbrella of the Latvian Film Corporation, which includes three feature studios, a documentary and animation studio, and a production services plant. Annual output has been halved, but soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Latvian government created the National Film Center—a state body similar to the film institutes of the Scandinavian countries, designed to both promote film culture and stimulate production. As occurred in Lithuania, a new generation of directors emerged whose ties to the old Soviet system and its repressive history were tenuous at best. Currently, the state underwrites about 37 percent of the industry's overhead, with the rest

coming from private investment, and Latvian cinema has shown itself to be surprisingly healthy, despite its small audience base.

Estonia

Estonia's Tallinnfilm Studio produced an average of five films annually, most of which were less Soviet in sensibility than Nordic. (Culturally and linguistically, the Estonians are much closer to the Finns than to either the Russians or their Baltic neighbors.) By 1990, Estonian cinema had become directly confrontational, with Jüri Sillart's *The Awakening* (*Aratus*), a film about the KGB's mass deportation of Estonian citizens to the Gulag in 1949, and Peeter Simm's *The Man Who Never Was* (*Inimene keda polnud*), a black comedy of the German/Russian occupation, becoming the year's most popular features.

Independence brought industry restructuring in that Tallinnfilm became a 50 percent state-owned joint stock company and two private companies (Freyja Film and Arcadia) entered the market, but annual production remained stable during the transition, producing a remarkable number of films relative to Estonia's tiny population. A prime example is *Darkness in Tallinn* (*Tallinn pimeduses*, 1993), a patriotic thriller directed by Ilkka Järvilaturi and co-produced with Finland, Sweden, and the United States.

In 1997, the Estonian Film Foundation was established as a Scandinavian-type institution to promote film development, production, and distribution. Its first act was to liquidate Tallinnfilm and use the proceeds to build a new cinema center with screening facilities, editing suites, and laboratories to serve the nation's sixty-five small production companies, most of which are devoted to tele-production. The state provides about 50 percent of all production funding (minimum budgets per feature are about $350,000), reaching more than $10 million in 2010. Although it is smaller than many American cities, Estonia remains a viable film-producing nation, accounting for an average of about ten features per year.



Darkness in Tallinn (*Tallinn pimeduses*; Ilkka Järvilaturi, 1993).

Moldavia (Moldova)

Moldavian cinema enjoyed some prominence in the 1960s and the 1970s, but its achievements were of a distinctly national character, embodying local customs, everyday rituals, and the traditional arts. Moldavia, or Moldova, was originally part of Romania, and Romanian is still its primary language, making the region ethnically and culturally distinct from its Soviet neighbors. Nevertheless, Moldova-Film Studio was founded in 1957 and produced its first feature in *Chieftain Kodr* (Mikhail Kalik, Boris Rytsarev, and Olga Ulitskaya, 1958), an epic about a national folk hero.

Perhaps the most extraordinary film to come out of Moldavia during a brief groundswell of national expression during the late 1960s and the early 1970s was Emil Loteanu's (1936–2003) *The Leutary* (1971), which concerns the adventures of a legendary tribe of Bessarabian Gypsies devoted to the practice of music. Virtuoso musicians and singers all, the Leutary were ill treated at home, so they traveled Europe for centuries, performing for whomever would receive them. Loteanu conceived and executed the film like a musical composition, blending original Leutary songs with variations by leading contemporary musicians to create a stunning, multitenored display of Moldavian folk art.

As the Brezhnev regime grew increasingly hostile to "ethnic nationalism," however, the brilliance was drained out of Moldova-Film. Moreover, the political turmoil and civil strife that have afflicted Moldavia (population 4.4 million) since the collapse of the Soviet Union make the future of its cinema unclear. Few films have been made in the country since independence, the government has failed to protect its domestic industry, and funding is sporadic at best.

Transcaucasian Cinema

Georgia

Of all the cinemas of the former Soviet republics, that of Georgia (population 3.8 million) is the oldest and most sophisticated, preceding the Bolshevik Revolution by at least ten years. Its first feature, *Berikaoba-Keenoba* by Aleksandre Tsutsunava (1881–1955), was made in 1909, and its first full-length documentary, *The Travels of Akaki Tsereteli in Racha and Lechkhumi* by Vasil Amashukeli (1886–1977), appeared in 1912. By the eve of World War I, there were twenty-nine movie theaters in Georgia, and the first national production company was at work making *Kristine* (Aleksandre Tsutsunava, 1916), a realistic social drama based on a Georgian novel, starring famous performers from the Georgian stage. (The cinema's tradition of collaborating with Tbilisi's Rustaveli Theater Institute, which now has its own film department, continues to this day.)

In 1921, the Soviet regime was established in Georgia, and Goskinprom Gruzia, the state film company, was formed at Tbilisi the following year. Appropriately, one of its first productions was Ivan Perestiani's (1870–1959) *The Little Red Devils* (1923), a revolutionary "Western" about three young people fighting with the Red cavalry during the civil war (1918–1920), which was highly influential of the Soviet industry as a whole.

The period 1924 to 1937 is known as the "silver age" of Georgian cinema, because it witnessed the greatest work of its first generation of professional directors—for example, Perestiani's *Three Lives* (1924), lavishly praised by Anatoli Lunacharski as a landmark in Soviet cinema; Mikhail Kalatozov's extraordinary documentary *Salt for Svanetia* (*Sol Svanetii*, 1930); Nikolai Shengelaia's (1901–1943) twin masterworks *Eliso* (1928) and *The Twenty-Six Commissars* (1932; shot in Baku, Azerbaijan); and Mikheil Chiaureli's (1894–1974) *Arsena* (1937), a socialist-realist account of an early-nineteenth-century peasant revolt.

The most influential of these were the Shengelaia films—*Eliso*, recounting an incident in which a tsarist decree attempted to evict an entire Caucasian mountain village and give its land to the Cossacks; and *The Twenty-Six Commissars*, based on events that took place in Azerbaijan during the civil war. Admired by both Eisenstein and Pudovkin, these films established Shengelaia as the founder of Georgia's most important film family and, with other films of the "silver age," moved the Russian Formalist poet/critic Viktor Shklovsky to remark that Soviet cinema began not in Moscow, but in Tbilisi.

During World War II, only a handful of films were made, among them Chiaureli's nationalist epic *Giorgi Saakadze* (1942–1943), and after the war—as elsewhere in the Soviet Union and its client states—Zhdanovian socialist realism held sway in such "artistic documentaries" as Chiaureli's *The Vow* (1946) and *The Fall of Berlin* (1949). From 1938 to 1952, Goskinprom Gruzia was renamed Tbilisi Studios, and after 1953, it adopted its current configuration as the Georgian Film Studio, or Gruziafilm.

Modern Georgian cinema is considered to have begun with the release of Tengiz Abuladze and Rezo Chkheidze's *Magdana's Little Donkey* (*Lurdzha Magdany*, 1956) on the cusp of the Khrushchev thaw. Its directors were part of the second generation of Georgian filmmakers, many of whom had graduated from the VGIK but went on to revive the best tradition of Georgian cinema of the 1920s and the 1930s, including, most prominently, Tengiz Abuladze (1924–1994), Georgi (b. 1937) and Eldar Shengelaia (b. 1933), Otar Iosseliani (b. 1934), and Lana Gogoberidze (b. 1928). (Other Georgian filmmakers, however, such as Mikhail Kalatozov and Georgi Danelia [b. 1930], were co-opted by Mosfilm during the same period.)

Though Abuladze's best work is based on Georgian literature, he became internationally famous for *Repentance* (1984), a parable about a ruthless Georgian dictator ("Varlam Aravidze," or "no one") that was the first Soviet film to deal unflinchingly, if indirectly, with the murderous legacy of Stalin. This film, which was originally made for Georgian television and was



Ketevan Abuladze and Edisher Giorgobiani in *Repentance* (Tengiz Abuladze, 1984).

briefly shelved under the regime of Gorbachev's immediate predecessor, Konstantin Chernenko, received national Soviet distribution in 1985, thanks largely to lobbying by Eduard Shevardnadze, then secretary of the Georgian Communist Party. In its open confrontation of the Stalin Terror and its absolute resistance to censorship, *Repentance* marked a crucial turning point in Soviet film history and became a public icon of glasnost.

Georgi and Eldar Shengelaia, the sons of Nikolai Shengelaia and the famous actress Nato Vachnadze, were unquestionably the most influential Georgian filmmakers of the 1960s and the 1970s. Georgi's short feature *Alaverdoba*, made while he was still at the VGIK in 1962 but unreleased until 1966, is an extraordinary essay on the corruption of Georgian folk culture by modernity, set during a religious festival at an ancient cathedral in the Alazani Mountains. *Pirosmani* (1969), his visionary biography of the primitivist painter Niko Pirosmanishvili (1862–1918), became a landmark of new Georgian cinema by reaffirming it as an index of national identity. Often compared to Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* (1966), Shengelaia's film conveys the color, texture, and formal composition of the painter's work, as well as his sense of the magical harmony between art and life.

In his subsequent work, Georgi extended his scrutiny of the Georgian character to other national pastimes. Meanwhile, his brother, Eldar, worked the fantastic vein of Georgian humor in *White Caravan* (1963), a parable about the generation gap set among Khevsurian shepherds; and *Samanishvili's Stepmother/Samanishvilis dedinatsvali* (1977), a modern-day version of a play his father had first adapted as a screenwriter in 1927. Eldar's satiric sensibility occasionally brought him into conflict with the Soviet authorities; for example, *Blue Mountains, or an Improbable Story* (1983), a whimsical allegory of the crumbling away of Georgian national values under socialism, was nearly banned.

The films of Otar Iosseliani provoked a similar response, and several were, in fact, either shelved or banned. Both a professional musician and a painter before he turned to filmmaking, Iosseliani studied at the VGIK under Dovzhenko, and his first film, *April* (*Aprel*, 1961; also known as *Stories about Things*), was attacked by the censors and withdrawn from general



Dato Tarielachvili in *Chantrapas* (Otar Iosseliani, 2010), one of Iosseliani's later works about a Georgian director who moves to France, which mirrors his own experiences, and his struggles with creative expression.

release. *When the Leaves Fall/Falling Leaves* (*Listopad*, 1967) was a dramatic feature similarly shot in documentary style. Set in contemporary Tbilisi, it concerns the disillusionment of an idealistic young man who takes a job at a state wine distillery and learns of the corruption of Soviet industry from the inside. Heavily edited for distribution, *When the Leaves Fall* was succeeded by *There Lived a Singing Blackbird* (*Zhil pevchiy drozd*, 1970) and *Pastorale* (1976), both of which were shelved for their "subjectivity." Iosseliani then emigrated to Paris, having acquired an international reputation on the festival circuit with all three films. There he has produced several highly regarded, plotless films, which are rich in both their documentary-like observation of human nature and their cinematic poetry.

Lana Gogoberidze was the first Soviet director to focus on women's issues since the 1920s, and her first feature, *Under One Sky* (1961), was adapted from an anthology of novellas about women in different periods of Georgian history. She worked on similar themes during the 1960s, producing her best work in the late 1970s and the 1980s.

The work of the third generation of Georgian directors, most of them trained by the Faculty of Cinema established in 1975 at the Tbilisi State Theatrical Institute, began to appear during the 1980s. Prominent were Irakli Kvirikadze's (b. 1939) *The Swimmer* (*Plovets*, 1981), a period film that prematurely satirized the Stalinist cult of the hero and was shown only in a severely edited version until glasnost; and a film by his wife, Nana Djordjadze (b. 1948), *Robinsoniad, or My English Grandfather* (*Robinzonada, ili moi angliskii dedushka*, 1987), a satire about a British engineer who comes to a remote Georgian village during the 1920s to build a link in the London–New Delhi telegraph line and falls desperately in love with the sister of a local party boss. The latter won the Caméra d'Or Award at Cannes.

The situation of Georgian cinema in the 1990s was inextricably entwined with national politics. In March 1991, Georgians voted overwhelmingly to declare their independence from the Soviet Union and elected Zviad K. Gamsakhurdia as their president the following month. Gamsakhurdia quickly assumed dictatorial powers and, with virtually all filmmakers opposed to him, restructured Gruziafilm into twelve separate production units, with financing negotiable only through his office. This sent shock waves through the industry but had a less immediate effect on production than did the civil war that broke out during Christmas 1991, wrecking Tbilisi and forcing the Gamsakhurdia government to flee.

In February 1992, a coalition of democrats and rebel warlords invited Eduard Shevardnadze—former Georgian Communist Party chief, former Soviet foreign minister, and the world's most famous living Georgian—to save the nation. Meanwhile, Gamsakhurdia resumed the civil war. Shevardnadze, serving as president of an independent but considerably weakened Republic of Georgia, preserved order until September 1993, when the Abkhazian separatists prevailed over his own army and took control of western Georgia. Gamsakhurdia's rebels now threatened Tbilisi, and Shevardnadze was forced to strike a deal for protection with Russian president Boris Yeltsin and join the Commonwealth of Independent States.

By 1994, Russian troops were supplying Georgia's army and protecting its railways and ports, as in former times, and the Georgian film industry was able to crank back up again after a hiatus of nearly two years. Georgian cinema stayed alive through the offices of independent production companies, such as Sameda and Debiujti, and investment capital from France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and Denmark. New work appeared in 2000 that won numerous festival awards and announced a renewed vitality for Georgian film. Yet this was clearly a comedown for an industry that produced an average of fourteen features a year during the Soviet era, more than sixty of whose highly trained directors cannot find work today.

Because the size of its domestic market is so small (there is only a handful of movie theaters in the entire city of Tbilisi, and releasing remains in the hands of the Russian distribution network), the preservation of Georgia's uniquely diverse national film culture will increasingly depend on Western export markets cultivated through competition in international festivals.

Armenia

The first Armenian feature was *The Tragedy of Turkish Armenia* (also known as *Under the Kurds*, 1915), written, directed, and photographed by A. Minervin. In 1922, Armenia joined the Soviet Union, and its cinema was nationalized as Gosfotokino, then Armenkino, with studios in the capital city of Yerevan. The first feature-length documentary, *Soviet Armenia* (1924), appeared at the same time. Armenian silent cinema was dominated by the work of Amo Bek-Nazarov (1891–1965), whose historical drama *Namus* (1925) and slapstick *Shor and Shorshor* (1927) set the national standard



The Color of Pomegranates (*Sayat-Nova*; Sergei Parajanov, 1969).

for realism and comedy, respectively. Bek-Nazarov's other silent films include *Zareh* (1926), a melodrama about life in a Kurdish tribe under the tsars, and *Khas-Push*, a documentary on the exploitation of the people of Iran (then Persia) by British trading companies at the turn of the century.

Sound came late to Armenia—its last silent feature was Amasi Martirosyan's (1897–1971) village tragedy *Gikor* (1934), adapted from a literary classic; and its first sound film was Bek-Nazarov's *Pepo* (1935), a period drama on the theme of social justice with a score by composer Aram Khachaturian. Like the rest of the Soviet Union, Armenia experienced a grim period of Stalinist repression during the 1930s and the 1940s, when only a handful of films could be made. A postwar revival did not occur until Yerevan Studio, renamed Armenfilm in 1957 to emphasize its national distinctness, attracted a new generation of directors who made films about Armenian daily life. At the same time, the work of two other Armenian directors—Sergei Parajanov (1924–1990) and Ardavazd "Arthur" Peleshyan (b. 1938)—was coming to international attention.

Although he worked during the first part of his career for Ukrainian studios and the last for Gruziafilm, it is clear today that Parajanov's art was deeply and irrevocably Armenian in character. Nowhere is this more apparent than in *The Color of Pomegranates* (also known as *Sayat-Nova*), the single, astonishing feature he made for Armenfilm in 1969. Conceived as an extraordinarily complex series of tableaux representing the life and work of the visionary eighteenth-century poet Arutin Sayadyan, the film was shelved by Soviet authorities until 1973, when it was released in a drastically re-edited version supervised by Sergei Yutkevich. In 1992, *The Color of Pomegranates* became available in the "director's cut" originally submitted to Soviet censors in 1969, and an even fuller version is known to exist today, but only in the Armenfilm archives.

Peleshyan, who was a close personal friend of Parajanov, began making documentaries while a student at the VGIK, including *The Beginning* (*Nachalo*, 1967), an emotionally charged compilation film on the October Revolution. This ten-minute short

replaced narrative commentary with a complicated audiovisual structure, based on what Peleshyan would later call "distance montage." During the next twenty years, he went on to produce at Armenfilm a body of work very similar in structure to polyphonic music, where linear and horizontal progressions interact.

In 1971, the Telefilm Studios of Armenia were established in Yerevan by the State Television and Radio Committee and became a key factor in production financing (e.g., much of Peleshyan's later work). Even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the terrible earthquake of December 7, 1988, and ethnic warfare with Azerbaijan for control of Nagorno-Karabakh injected elements of raw tragedy into Armenian cinema, it produced films concerning the catastrophes of the nation's recent past, beginning with the genocidal massacre of more than 1 million Armenians between 1915 and 1918 by the Ottoman Turks.

Since 1992, the Republic of Armenia has been an independent state, and Armenfilm's monopoly has been challenged by a whole series of "cooperative" or private producers. In the mid-1990s, the economic situation of Armenia became grim—since the winter of 1993, its crucial lifelines to the outside world had been cut off, first by an Azerbaijani blockade and then by unrest in neighboring Georgia. Electricity could be generated only a few hours each day, and Yerevan was lit at night by candlelight.

In the short term, then, any resurgence of Armenian cinema depended on the activity of numerous Armenian filmmakers living outside of the country. (Only one-third of all Armenians make up the republic's resident population of 3.5 million; the rest are dispersed throughout the globe.) These include Don Askarian (b. 1949) in Germany; Atom Egoyan (b. 1960) in Canada; and Michael Hagopian (1913–2010), Theodore Bogosian (b. 1951), Ara Madzounian (b. 1953), and Nigol Bezjian (b. 1955) in the United States.

Immediately following the Soviet period (1991–1993), Armenian production doubled, and there was talk of a "New Armenian Cinema," but investment capital dried up quickly during the general financial crisis of 1994–1995, and most of the newly created studios failed. By 1996, it was clear that only state intervention could save the cinema, and to that end its main studios—Hayfilm Hayk and Yerevan—would remain under state control for several years past the turn of the century.

The most promising new director to emerge from post-Soviet Armenia is Edgar Baghdasaryan (b. 1964), whose early feature *Outflow/Black Wall* (*Hosq/Sev pat*, 1997) won some festival notices; his independently produced, full-length documentary *Aratta—The Land of Holy Rituals* (*Aratta—srpazan tserery erkir*, 2000) commemorated the arrival and spread of Christianity to mark the 1,700th anniversary of its adoption as the Armenian state religion. Appropriately, Baghdasaryan's next film, the Armenian-French co-production *Mariam* (2005), was a parable about a modern-day Virgin Mary.

Other notable post-Soviet films are Harutyun Khachatryan's *Documentarist* (*Vaveragrogh*, 1997; released 2003), about a director shooting a film on Yerevan; Armen Dovlatian's mystically inflected crime drama *Dreams* (1998); Suren Babayan's *Crazy Angel* (*Khent hreshtak*, 2000), which takes place on the set of a biblical film adapted from Pär Lagerkvist's novel *Barabbas*; Albert S. Mkrtchyan's *A Happy Bus* (also known as *Melody of a Destroyed City/Kandvats kaghaki meghedy*, 2001), set in the aftermath of the 1988 earthquake that devastated Yerevan; and Tigran Xmalian's *Pierlequin* (2001), based on the life of Leonid Engibarov, a great Armenian clown and poet.

At a significantly reduced Armenfilm, Ardavazd Peleshyan continued to make feature-length documentaries—for example, *An Armenian World*, co-produced by the Armenian Ministry of Culture and France's Centre National du Cinéma. As Armenia approached the tenth anniversary of its independence from the former Soviet Union, it could count thirty feature films to its credit between 1991 and 2001, a remarkable achievement for this small nation, which is so depleted of natural resources that it was forced to ration water and electricity for much of the decade.

Contributing to the general improvement in studio conditions, however, was the fact that Iranian and Western filmmakers have been using Armenia as a production base because of its spectacular scenery. Moreover, with the privatization of Armenfilm (also known as Hayfilm) in 2005 and the foundation of the Armenian National Film Center in 2006, state subsidies for the national film industry approached $2 million.

Azerbaijan

Prerevolutionary cinema in Azerbaijan was dominated by Boris Svetlov, whose national epic *In the Realm of Oil and Millions* (1916) and *Arshin mal-alan* (1917), adapted from popular theater, were the first Azerbaijani features. After the Bolshevik Revolution, the cinema was nationalized and directed toward the production of such "documentaries" as *One Year of Power in Soviet Azerbaijan* (1921) and *In the Name of God* (Abbas Mirza

Sharifzade, 1925), a propaganda film directed against Islam. Sharifzade (1893–1938) also directed the popular *Haji Gara* (1929), a version of a classical comedy by Mirza Akhundov.

During the 1930s, Azerbaijanfilm hosted directors from other republics. Those who came to its studios in Baku to take advantage of regional scenery and culture include Amo Bek-Nazarov of Armenia (*House on a Volcano* [1929], *Sevil* [1929]), Nikolai Shengelaia of Georgia (*The Twenty-Six Commissars* [1932]), Boris Barnet of Russia (*By the Bluest of Seas* [1936], the first Soviet color film), and Viktor Turin of Ukraine (*Baku People* [1938]), among others.

During the World War II era, Samed Mardanov directed the obligatory socialist-realist epic *Peasants/Countrymen* (*Kandlilar,* 1939), and the first postwar film was a remake of *Arshin mal-alan* (1945) by Rza Tahmasib (1894–1980) and Nikolai Leshchenko (1908–1954). This latter began a cycle of remakes that has characterized the Azerbaijani cinema since the war—*26 Baku Commissars* (1965), directed by Azhder Ibragimov (1919–1993); *Arsin mal alan* (1965), directed by Tofik Tagi-zade (1919–1998); and *Sevil* (1970), directed by Vladimir Gorriker (b. 1925)—testifying to its relative lack of strength among the other Transcaucasian film cultures.

Nevertheless, four Azerbaijani directors have achieved reputations beyond their regional borders in films that stand apart from the mainstream: Gasan Seidbejli (1920–1980), *The Telephonist* (1962) and *I Remember You, Master* (1969); Rasim Odzagov (b. 1933), *The Interrogation* (1979) and *Before the Closed Door* (1981); and Eldar Kuliev (b. 1941), *In a Southern City* (1969), *Babek* (1979), and *Nizami* (1982). Also, Vaghif Mustafayev (b. 1954) attracted critical attention with his glasnost-era black-market satire *The Villain* (1989), the first postwar domestic feature shot in the Azerbaijan language (Azeri), rather than in Russian.



Lev Sverdlin and Yelena Kuzmina in *By the Bluest of Seas* (Boris Barnet and S. Mardanin, 1936).

After proclaiming independence in 1991, Azerbaijan broke completely with Moscow, and the government began a modest subsidy program to encourage independent production of films.

Central Asian Cinema

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan has the oldest and largest of all the Central Asian national cinemas. The first films were shown in the capital of Tashkent in 1897, and a major production company—the Russo-Bukhar company, Bukhkino—was founded there in 1924, after the Uzbeks joined the Soviet Union. The state-run Uzbekgoskino studio was established the following year under the direction of Nabi Ganiev (1904–1952) and immediately released two Russian-directed anti-Islamic features, *The Muslim Woman* (Dmitri Bassalygo, 1925) and *The Minaret of Death* (V. Viskovski, 1925). Most Uzbek silents were documentaries and popular science films, but the first sound film, Aleksandr Usoltsev-Graf's *The Vow* (1937), was a socialist-realist epic of collectivization.

During World War II, several central Russian studios were evacuated to Tashkent. In the 1950s, historical and biographical films, such as Kamil Jarmatov's (1903–1978) *Avicenna* (1957), were the order of the day until a new generation of Central Asian filmmakers graduated from the VGIK and were dispersed to their respective national studios in the 1960s, where they quickly became a dominant force. In 1969, for example, four of the six features produced by the Uzbek studios (renamed Uzbekfilm in 1961) were made by just such young directors.

Chief among these was Elior Ishmukhamedov (b. 1942), whose first feature, *Tenderness* (1966), attracted attention at several international festivals for its stylistic originality. This multi-episode film was written by Odelsha Agishev and photographed by Dilshat Fatkhullin, both VGIK graduates, who continued to work with the director for much of his early career. Ishmukhamedov's *The Birds of Our Hopes* (1977) was shelved for being implicitly critical of Soviet society, but *Farewell Green Summer* (1985), a love story that spans the history of modern Uzbekistan from Stalin to Gorbachev, avoided censure, despite the fact that it alludes quite specifically to the official corruption strangling the republic, and it set the stage for Ishmukhamedov's 1989 signature work, *The Shock*. Based on an actual incident from the Brezhnev era, this conspiracy thriller concerns an investigative reporter who attempts to expose the leaders of a mafia syndicate that is manipulating the Uzbek cotton industry for illegal profit; in the process, he discovers that the crime ring operates at the highest levels of the Uzbek power structure and is killed for his trouble. *The Shock* became a Soviet box-office hit in 1989 and was praised by Gorbachev himself as "new thinking in cinema, very representative of perestroika."

Another prominent Uzbek director is Ali Khamraev (b. 1937), whose *White, White Storks* (1966), scripted by Agishev and photographed by Fatkhullin, attracted considerable attention for its portrayal of a Muslim country woman who elects to leave her husband for her lover. His *Dilorom* (1969) was the first Uzbek film-opera, based on classical poems of Alisher Navoi recounting the doomed love of a slave girl for a court painter. Most of Khamraev's subsequent work has dealt with the liberation of Uzbek women from Muslim cultural oppression, although he has also made several symbolic dramas. In 1991, he completed *Tamerlane the Great*, an international co-production shot under the auspices of Uzbekfilm.

Other notable Uzbek filmmakers are Shukhrat Abbasov (b. 1931), Ravil Batyrov (b. 1931), Melo Absalov, Djanka Faiziyev, and Farid Davletshin, whose remarkable feature *Kiep's Last Journey* (1990), based on a modernist novel evoking centuries-old folk customs, was the first film shot and released in the Uzbek language. (The Soviet practice had been to dub films from all of the republics into Russian for national distribution, repressing the most fundamental form of nationalist expression.)

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Uzbekfilm has been the home of several international co-productions; in the early 1990s, it had a staff of more than 1,000 and was producing twelve to fourteen features per year, about half of which were telefilms, as well as about fifty shorts. A market crisis in 1995–1996 caused major retrenchment. The government partnered in the mid-1990s with private interests to create Uzbek Kino, a joint production-distribution entity that by the turn of the century was releasing about fifty theatrical features annually.

By the 2010s, 99 percent of Uzbek theaters showed nationally produced films, with the other 1 percent showing films from India or the United States. On average, forty to forty-five full-length features are made a year by nearly as many small studios, most of them shot on video at costs of less than $30,000. This

type of fast and cheap production is locally called *Kohn-Takhta*, or "the vegetables' cutting board," but prestige films for festivals on the international circuit are still produced at Uzbekfilm, where aesthetic standards remain high.

Kazakhstan

Viktor Turin's documentary feature on the building of the Turkistan-Siberian railway, *Turksib*, was filmed in Kazakhstan in 1929, as was the first indigenous short, *The Arrival of the First Train at Alma-Ata*. Yet Kazakh cinema didn't really begin until the creation of the Alma-Ata documentary film studios in that capital city in 1937 and the evacuation thereto of Mosfilm and Lenfilm after the German invasion of June 1941. For the duration of World War II, Alma-Ata (the name means "Father of Apples") became the film capital of the Soviet Union, producing more than three-fourths of its features from 1942 through 1945. It was here, less than 150 miles west of the Chinese border, that Eisenstein shot *Ivan the Terrible, Part I* (1945) and *Part II* (1946).

The postwar years were marked by the first adaptation from Kazakh literature, *The Songs of Abaij* (Efim Aron, 1945), from the novel by Muhtar Auezov; and the first Kazakh film in color, *Djamboul* (Efim Dzigan, 1952). At this point, Kazakhfilm settled into a steady rhythm of producing several features and four to five documentary shorts per year, attracting modest attention here and there for works by such traditional directors as Abdulla Karsakbayev (b. 1940) and Shaken Ajmanov (1914–1970).

Recently, however, Alma-Ata has become, in *Variety*'s term, "the Hollywood of Central Asia" for several reasons. Kazakhstan (population 17.7 million) is geographically the largest former Soviet republic after Russia, and it is a prime target for Western development capital, owing to both its size and wealth of natural resources, including oil. During the 1980s, Kazakhstan experienced a remarkable surge of cinematic talent, known alternately as the "Wild Kazakh boys" or the "Kazakh New Wave."

This phenomenon began in 1984, when a special five-year program to train filmmakers for the Kazakhfilm Studios was begun at the VGIK under the direction of avant-garde auteur Sergei Soloviev (b. 1944) and theater director Anatoly Vasiliev (b. 1942). Even before they graduated, four of the program's ten students had made their first feature films—including, most explosively, Rachid Nugmanov's (b. 1954) *The Needle* (*Igla*, 1988), which became first a Soviet, then an international, box-office hit in 1989. This stylish, hypnotic thriller features the late Leningrad rock star Viktor Tsoi as a young man who fights to smash a local drug ring, and its success inspired three other Soloviev students to produce offbeat, low-budget features in 1989—Serik Aprimov's (b. 1960) *The Last Stop* (*Qijan*), Alexander Baranov (b. 1955) and Bakhyt Kilibaev's (b. 1958) *The Three* (*Troye*), and Abai Karpikov's (b. 1955) *Little Fish in Love* (*Vliublennaya rybka*)—all of which received international distribution.

When Nugmanov was elected first secretary of the Kazakh Filmmakers Union in April 1989, it was clear to all that major changes were afoot. The following year saw the completion of two important projects—Ardak Amirkulov's (b. 1955) three-hour epic *The Fall of Otrar* (*Gibel Otrara*, 1991), which uses the siege of a Kazakh city destroyed by Genghis Khan in the thirteenth century as an allegory for Russia's social/political climate on the eve of Hitler's invasion in 1941, and Yermak Shinarbaev's (b. 1953) *Revenge* (*Mesti*, 1990), a philosophical meditation on violence in seven chapters, based on ancient Korean legends and shot on location in Kazakhstan and Sakhalin Island.

Other important New Wave figures are Bakhit Karakulov (*The Sorcerers* [*Razluchnitsy*, 1991]) and Talgat Temenov (b. 1954) (*Wolf Cub among People* [*Volchonok sredi lyudey,* 1988], *Running Target* [*Byegushaya mishen*, 1991]). Nugmanov's much anticipated second feature, *The Wild East* (or *The Last Soviet Film* [*Diki vostok*, 1993]), was in production when the Soviet Union collapsed. Beautifully shot in the mountains of Kirghizia by Nugmanov's brother Murat, this loose version of Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* is a wildly eclectic parody of Western and Soviet genres that provides an ironic epitaph for what had been one of the world's greatest cinemas.

Kazakhfilm had the fourth-largest studio in the Soviet Union and what currently has the largest production facility in Central Asia, employing more than 1,200 people, but it badly needs new facilities and equipment. Soviet policy heavily favored the allocation of funds to Mosfilm and Lenfilm over regional studios and was notably ungenerous to the cinemas of the nation's southern rim. Even during the 1990s, Kazakh filmmakers experienced shortages of film stock, an inability to record sound during shooting, and a dearth of postproduction equipment. Despite these obstacles, Kazakhfilm maintained an average output of four theatrical features and four telefilms, plus five to six feature documentaries, fifty documentary shorts, and five animated cartoons a year for much of the decade.

More promising still, in the first rush of freedom that followed the collapse of the Soviet empire, more than thirty independent production companies were operating in Kazakhstan. By 1995, however, the boom was over; many private studios went out of business, while a few were kept afloat by state financing. In 1996, Kazakhstan, which has about thirty highly trained directors, released only nine features, all of them backed by the state through the newly created National Production Center (NPC), with average budgets of about $500,000.

Kirghizia (Kyrgyzstan)

Studios were founded in Kirghizia's capital of Frunze (now Bishkek) in 1942, but there was no development until well after World War II. In 1963, the Russian director Larisa Shepitko came to Kirghizfilm to shoot *Heat*, an adaptation of a story by the famous Kirghiz novelist Chingiz Aitmatov (1928–2008), who was the studio's artistic director at the time and later first secretary of the Kirghiz Filmmakers' Union, a position he held for more than twenty years. This film employed (as sound engineer and leading player, respectively) two men who were to join the first ranks of Kirghiz cinema, Tolomush Okeyev (1935–2001) and Bolotbek Shamshiev (b. 1941).

Okeyev graduated from the Leningrad Institute of Cinema Engineers (LIKI) in 1958 and then went on to study screenwriting and direction at Goskino. His first film, *These Are the Horses* (1965), was a documentary short about the life cycle of horses. (The Kirghizians



Bolotbek Shamshiev and Klara Yusupzhanova in *Heat* (Larisa Shepitko,1963).



Mirlan Abdykalykov in *Beshkempir: The Adopted Son* (Aktan Abdykalykov, 1998).

are nomadic horsemen whose language had no alphabet until 1922; Okeyev himself was born in a tent on the steppes.) Other early films were semi-documentaries, such as the feature *Worship of Fire* (1972), which re-created the life of the republic's first woman Communist, Urkui Salieva, who was murdered by Muslim reactionaries during the collectivization of the 1930s.

Okeyev's first dramatic feature, *The Sky of Our Childhood* (1967), became one of the seminal works of Kirghiz cinema in its dramatization of the effect of the passing away of traditional nomadic culture during the 1920s. Okeyev's masterpiece is *The Descendant of the Snow Leopard* (1985), based on the oral epic of the Kirghiz culture hero Koshoshash. Shot on location in the majestic Tien Shan Mountains, this film recounts the struggle of Koshoshash to save his people from enemies natural and human, ultimately at the expense of his own life. Okeyev endowed it with legendary grandeur appropriate to its cyclic, balladic structure.

Bolotbek (Bolot) Shamshiev, a VGIK graduate, established a reputation for historical re-creation and thrilling scenes of mass action with his first feature, *A Shot at the Mountain Pass* (also known as *A Shot at the Karash Pass*, 1968). This account of the life of a horse thief in prerevolutionary times was followed by *The Curse* (also known as *Red Poppies of Issyk-Kul*, 1971), an adventure film about the Kirghiz heroin trade in the 1920s. Many of Shamshiev's subsequent films—*The White Ship* (1975), *Among the People* (1978), *Early Cranes* (1979), *The Wolf Pit* (1982), and *Snipers* (1985)—have been adaptations from Chingiz Aitmatov, co-written by himself. Shamshiev also directed Kirghizia's first glasnost-era production, *The Ascent of Fujiyama* (1988), an elaborate allegory of the republic under communism set in the context of a May Day celebration during the Brezhnev era and adapted from a controversial Aitmatov play first produced in 1973.

Kirghizfilm boasts a handful of other directors, but it is the smallest of the Central Asian studios. As of 1990, it owned only several Western-made cameras and had only a single soundstage. The irony of the film industry of this small nation (population 5.6 million)—officially renamed Kyrgyzstan in 1992—is that it possesses the spectacular scenery and the cinematic talent to sustain international co-productions such as *Genghis Khan* (Ken Annakin, 1991), with its fifty-six weeks of shooting, 20,000 extras, and 3,000 horses. (The Kirghiz partner in *Genghis Khan* was Future, a private production company owned by Tolomush Okeyev.)

Among the handful of Kirghiz features that have appeared since independence, the most prominent is *Beshkempir: The Adopted Son* (Aktan Abdykalykov, 1998), a collaboration between Kirghizfilm and France's Noé Productions. A simple coming-of-age tale, shot by cinematographer Hassan Kidiraliev in stark black and white with occasional explosions of color, *Beshkempir* resonates with the clash between modernity and Kirzghizia's still preindustrial society.

Tadjikistan

Tadjik-kino (later Tadjikfilm) was founded in 1930 and produced only a handful of films before the 1980s, but with glasnost and perestroika, a variety of genres and styles emerged to forge a link with the long-repressed Tadjik past. Fundamental to contemporary Tadjik cinema is the work of Davlat Khudonazarov (b. 1944), who is one of the leading figures in the non-Communist opposition movement and the current chair of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Union of Cinematographers. His best-known features, *First Spring of Youth* (1982) and *The Ringing Streams in Melting Snow* (1982), present a lyrical vision of life in the Pamir Mountains, while *Ustod* (*Master*, 1988) uses archival material to portray the life of the revolutionary national poet Abulkosim Lakhurty and the world through which he moved.

Among Khudonazarov's followers are the documentarists Margarita Kasymova (b. 1938), Safarbek Soliev, Pulat Akhmatov, and Gennadij Artikov, all of whom delve into the ethnographic contexts of recent Tadjik history. Bako Sadykov's (b. 1941) *Whirlwind* (1988) was featured in Un Certain Regard at Cannes, and his

Blessed Bukhara (1991) is a synoptic, magical history of the city from ancient times through its mafia-dominated present.

Like Valery Akhadov's (b. 1945) *The Look* (1988), Mariam Yusupova's *Time of Yellow Grass* (1991), and Bakhtiar Khudonazarov's *Brothers* (1991) and *Kosh ba Kosh* (1993; Silver Lion, Venice), *Blessed Bukhara* won several international awards and is part of a minor "new wave" in Tadjik cinema. This is an amazing phenomenon because, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, state funding and centralized control were scrapped, and the fate of Tadjik cinema was tied to coproduction among independent companies, of which there were originally about ten.

All told, Tadjikistan (population 8.6 million) produced six to seven films annually in all categories in the early 1990s, and its capital, Dushanbe, became the site of an annual festival of films from Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and India until a ferocious civil war between Islamic fundamentalists and the secular (and still Communist-dominated) government forced its closing. This war, which began shortly after independence in 1991 and was concluded by a peace accord in 1997, sapped the Tadjik economy and brought filmmaking activities to a halt. In the early twenty-first century, with the lowest per capita gross domestic product in the former Soviet Union, Tadjikistan has lost its national cinema.

Turkmenistan

Turkmen cinema, institutionalized as Turkmenfilm in 1961, was established in the capital, Ashkhabad, in 1926. Among its first films was Yuli Raizman's *The Earth Thirsts* (1930), a documentary feature about the building of a canal through the desert, produced for Vostok-kino, which became one of the first Soviet sound films when narration and music were added in 1931. With that exception, few films of note were produced in Turkmenistan until the 1960s, when VGIK-trained directors such as Bulat Mansurov (b. 1937) and Hodjakuli Narliev (b. 1937) began their work in the industry. Mansurov's first film, *The Competition* (1963)—which was also the first feature made by a native Turkmenian—is about the perennial war between the Turkmen tribes and the Iranian Kurds, and it was shot by Narliev.

Their next collaboration, *Quenching the Thirst* (1967), based on a Russian novel, concerns the digging of a modern-day canal in the Kara-Kum Desert, but *The Slave-Girl* (1970) is generally regarded as their finest collaborative work. Carefully attuned to the complexities of the nation's recent past, this brilliantly stylized color and widescreen film concerns the explosive intersection of ancient Turkmen and Persian cultures with European revolutionary ideals.

Narliev became an important director in his own right with *Daughter-in-Law* (1972), the story of a Turkmenian woman's courage and endurance in waiting for her husband to return from World War II. Most of Narliev's subsequent films are similarly focused on the role of women in Muslim society. *Mankurts* (also known as *Wings of Memory*, 1990), however, is an allegory of totalitarian regimes adapted from Chingiz Aitmatov's novel *The Day Lasts Longer Than a Hundred Years*. This powerful film, the last completed at Turkmenfilm Studios, is about an ancient tribe that captures warriors from other tribes and subjects them to prolonged torture, destroying their memories and their will. Like the citizens of a totalitarian state, the victims become docile slaves (*mankurts*), with no sense of the past or expectations for the future.

The Turkmen cinema, as are most in Central Asia, is technologically impoverished but creatively and spiritually rich. It has, for example, a very fine tradition of making feature films for and about children, some of which rank among the best Turkmen films ever produced—for example, Usman Saparov's (b. 1938) *To Bring Up a Man* (1982) and Khalmamed Kakabaev's (b. 1939) *When My Father Comes Back* (1982) and *The Son* (1989).

The government of Turkmenistan, still Communist-dominated, mandated in 1992 that all films be made in the Turkmen language; it also committed itself to subsidizing five "art films" per year (the average annual output under Soviet rule). As the smallest Central Asian republic, however, Turkmenistan (population approximately 5.1 million) has a difficult time supporting a national cinema without foreign investment, of which there has so far been relatively little. Speaking to this issue, Narliev remarked, "For several years we should work for technology, then money," which may, in fact, provide a practical solution to the problem facing the second-poorest of the former Soviet states.

Soviet Russian Cinema

Among the Russian studios of the pre-glasnost era (and the Ukrainian and Belorussian, too), the byword was entertainment. As scholar Anna Lawton points out, under the leadership of Fillip Ermash from 1972 to 1986, the Soviet film industry was encouraged to produce



Aleksey Batalov and Vera Alentova in *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (Vladimir Menshov, 1980).

"commercial" films that catered to public tastes and increased box-office profits for the Soviet government. This policy led to the proliferation of mediocre genre films during the 1970s, but in the 1980s a trend was revived from the late silent era in the form of the *bytovoy* (or "slice of life") film—anything from comedy to melodrama that provided a slightly satiric perspective on contemporary society.

Beginning in 1980 with Georgi Danelia's *Autumn Marathon*, Eldar Riazanov's *Garage*, and Vladimir Menshov's *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (which unaccountably won the American Academy Award for Best Foreign Film that year), the *bytovoy* film became the 1980s' genre of choice among the Soviet mass audience, no doubt in part because it provided a forum for veiled social criticism in a society that officially permitted none. Many *bytovoy* were risqué romantic comedies, such as Pyotr Todorovski's *The Beloved Woman of Mechanic Gavrilov* (also known as *Gavrilov's Woman* [*Liubimaia zenshchinia mekhanika Gavrilova*, 1982]), but others focused on such formerly forbidden subjects as the black market—Ryazanov's *Train Station for Two* (*Voksal dlia dvoikh*, 1983) and Vladimir Bortko's *The Blonde around the Corner* (*Blondinka za uglom*, 1984)—and other aspects of the underground economy.

To prevent official censure, filmmakers added fantastic plot elements to their *bytovoy* films so that they could be characterized as "social fiction" (*sotsial'naia fantastika*), analogous to "science fiction" (*nauchnaia fantastika*). Until the dawning of glasnost, however, *bytovoy* remained escapist fare for a closed society, and many topics—such as criticism of the party, the depiction of dissidents, and the representation of emigration—were taboo under any circumstance.

Other Soviet film types indirectly expressive of dissent in this era were the so-called chamber films, dealing with disillusionment in personal lives, and films on the newly articulated problems of juvenile delinquency and troubled youths. Also obliquely critical of the system were the works of director Vadim Abdrashitov (b. 1945) and screenwriter Alexander Mindadze (b. 1949), a Ukrainian and a Georgian, respectively, working at Mosfilm. Their films practiced a kind of "socialist surrealism," valorizing old-fashioned virtues of heroism, duty, and honor in a society that no longer sustained them. Their use of a coded "Aesopian language" of allusion, evocation, and allegory was typical of many Soviet and Eastern European filmmakers during the last years of ideological censorship.

Most of the films described above emanated from Mosfilm in Moscow, the largest and best equipped of the Russian studios. Other socially committed films were produced by Vasili Shukshin (1929–1974) at the smallest, Gorki Film Studio, also in Moscow. Shukshin was a talented actor, writer, and director who made all of his features at Gorki, except for his last, *The Red Snowball Tree* (*Kalina krasnaia*, 1974); this film was briefly shelved for its sympathetic depiction of an ex-convict's return to society and its satiric treatment of bureaucracy, but it became, on release, one of the most popular Soviet films of the 1970s.

At mid-decade, the Lenfilm studio in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), Russia's second-largest studio, also emerged as an important source of reform-minded cinema in the work of Gleb Panfilov (b. 1934), Alexei German (b. 1938), and Dinara Asanova (1942–1985). This so-called Leningrad school was characterized by a stylistically restrained approach to complex human problems, often using black-and-white cinematography. Panfilov, for example, made three Lenfilm features focusing on the inner strength of women, each starring his wife, the gifted actress Inna Churikova, before going to Mosfilm to make *Theme* (*Tema*) in 1979. This film deals with the self-doubts of an officially acclaimed Soviet playwright and was banned for seven years as a threat to the prevailing cultural bureaucracy. Panfilov's *Valentina* (1981) continued the theme of women's integrity and spiritual wisdom, as did his two adaptations from Maxim Gorki—*Vassa* (1983) and *Mother* (*Mat*, 1990), the fifth version of the novel made famous by Pudovkin's film of 1926.

All three of Alexei German's films were either marginally released or shelved during the pre-glasnost years. *Trial on the Road* (*Proverka na dorogakh*, 1971; released 1986), *Twenty Days without War* (*Dvadtsat' dnei bez voiny*, 1976), and *My Friend Ivan Lapshin* (*Moi drug Ivan Lapshin*, 1983; released 1986) make up an authentically revisionist trilogy of the 1930s and the 1940s that could not be seen in its entirety until 1986. German's fourth film was not completed until the Soviet Union had passed into history.

Dinara Asanova, who died just as perestroika began, completed eight films in her brief career—many, such as those noted previously, on the subject of adolescents in crisis. A native of Kirghizia, Asanova studied at the VGIK under Mikhail Romm and was influenced by his documentary-like style.

Several other women directors have played important roles in the liberation of Soviet cinema in the last few decades, most notably Larisa Shepitko (1938–1979) and Kira Muratova (b. 1934). Shepitko was Ukrainian by birth, and she studied under Dovzhenko at the VGIK. Her diploma film, *Heat* (*Znoi*, 1963), was shot on location in the Kirghizian steppes and created a sensation among Moscow critics, but her second feature, *Wings* (*Krillia*, 1966), provoked considerable controversy in its depiction of a decorated female fighter pilot who cannot adjust to postwar life. As her films became increasingly religious and inflected with the iconography of the Orthodox Church, Shepitko's problems with the censors grew.

Her last completed work, *The Ascent* (*Voskhozhenie*, 1977; Golden Bear, Berlin), was an account of World War II POWs, collaborators, and deserters that challenged the official Soviet mythology of the "Great Patriotic War" by infusing it with imagery from the Passion of Christ. When Shepitko died in an automobile



Boris Plotnikov in *The Ascent* (*Voskhozhenie*; Larisa Shepitko, 1977).

accident in 1979, she was in the process of shooting *Farewell* (*Proschchan'e*), the extraordinary film completed by her husband, Elem Klimov, in 1980 and released in 1983. Simultaneously a fugue on ecological tragedy (a village is flooded by the government to create a reservoir) and a dirge for biological extinction, *Farewell* confirmed for many critics that death had become a presence in her work long before she actually encountered it.

Born in what is now Moldavia, Kira Muratova studied direction under Sergei Gerasimov at the VGIK, where she graduated in 1962, and was posted to the Odessa Film Studio in Ukraine. Her first solo film, *Brief Encounters* (*Korotkie vstrechi*, 1967; released 1987), scripted by the feminist writer Natalya Ryazantseva, portrays a love triangle among a government housing administrator (Muratova herself), an itinerant geologist (played by the late dissident poet/folksinger Vladimir Vysotsky), and a village girl (Nina Ruslanova) who becomes Muratova's maid. Shot in grainy black and white and experimentally structured, *Brief Encounter*s offered a less-than-flattering version of daily life in the Workers' Paradise and was effectively banned until the time of perestroika.

After perestroika, Muratova's works were rehabilitated, and she herself was able to direct *Change of Fortune* (*Peremena uchasti*, 1987), adapted from a Somerset Maugham story; and *The Asthenic Syndrome* (*Astenicheskii sindrom*, 1990), a montage of vignettes of contemporary Soviet life, revealing universal "asthenia" (exhaustion), as well as social disorder and urban decay. Since the rediscovery and recuperation of her singular talent (which includes writing most of her own scripts) in the late 1980s, Kira Muratova has been regarded as one of the most important film artists working in the former Soviet Union.

Similarly iconoclastic was the work of Elem Klimov (1933–2003), probably the Soviet cinema's single most important figure in its historic transition from state control to creative freedom. Klimov worked as an aviation engineer and then as a foreign correspondent for Soviet radio and television before attending the VGIK in 1959–1964. After the genre parody *Sport, Sport, Sport* (1971), an inventive collage of dramatic sequences, documentary footage, and interviews, Klimov completed Mikhail Romm's final film, *And I Still Believe* (*I vse-taki ja verju . . .*), with Marlen Khutsiev, in 1974, and then embarked on his most controversial project—*Agoniya* (also known as *Rasputin*, 1975).

Commissioned to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, this film is a remarkable assemblage of newsreel footage, old photographs, and staged tableaux that re-creates the last days of the imperial Russian court. Klimov sutures the narrative with voice-over historical commentary and uses transitions from black and white to color (and back again), both between and within shots, to suggest the surreality of the Romanovs' situation.

Yet *Agoniya* was shelved in 1975 because it portrayed Rasputin and Tsar Nicholas II sympathetically and, worse, made no mention of Lenin or the Bolsheviks. It was recut and released for the Moscow Film Festival in 1981 but not distributed in its original form until 1985 (although a nearly complete version was sold abroad by Sovexport and won the FIPRESCI Prize at Venice in 1982). Despite these difficulties, on the very eve of glasnost, Klimov made his greatest film, *Come and See* (*Idi i smotri*, 1985), perhaps the most apocalyptic work of postwar Soviet cinema.

One of many war films commissioned by Goskino to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of victory over Hitler, *Come and See* quickly established itself as definitive, winning both the Grand Prix at the 1985 Moscow International Festival and immense, awestruck popularity with Soviet audiences. Its title derived from the Revelation of St. John, *Come and See* is based on an account of the Nazis' destruction of the Belorussian village of Khatyn, one of 628 such villages razed by the Germans in their invasion of the USSR's western flank in 1943. Through the eyes of Florya, who joins the Belorussian partisans as a young boy and is transformed into a wizened wreck by war, we are taken on a relentless hundred-and-forty-two-minute journey toward the center of a horror so profound that the film itself is actually rendered speechless. (By the time Florya witnesses the burning of Khatyn [here called "Perekhody"] at midfilm, he—and thus we—can no longer hear distinct sounds because his eardrums have been ruptured by an aerial bombardment.)

The destruction of the village and the murder of its inhabitants make up one of the great mass scenes in contemporary cinema; it achieves such an extraordinary level of intensity in its montage of swooping Steadicam shots and shattering images of atrocity, visual and aural, that we are left with a nearly physical sense of devastation. Indeed, Klimov's depiction of brutality is so visceral as to approach the surreal, and in some ways *Come and See* is as stylistically experimental as the work of Tarkovsky or Parajanov. Yet the film ends on a positive note, with the partisans marching silently into the woods to the chords of Mozart's *Requiem*, after

(right) Olga Mironova and Aleksei Kravchenko in *Come and See* (*Idi i smotri*; Elem Klimov, 1985).



having ambushed the SS unit that burned the village, and Klimov's camera tilting to the sky.

Thus, *Come and See* is almost perfectly balanced on the cusp of glasnost, affirming some of the most cherished myths of the Soviet state about the "Great Patriotic War," at the same time that it subverts official codes of representation. It should come as no surprise that Klimov was elected first secretary/president of the Film Workers Union in the year following its release and pressed the fight for artistic freedom within the Soviet film industry to its logical conclusion.

Glasnost, Perestroika, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union

During the 1970s and the 1980s, filmgoing became an extremely popular activity in the Soviet Union. The average feature was seen by 17 million people, tickets cost $1 or less, and there were permanent theaters everywhere (5,257 of them in 1987). Even the country's most popular television show, *Film Panorama* (*Kinopanorama*), hosted by director Eldar Riazanov and drawing 140 million viewers per week, was about the movies. At this time, there were 20 studios throughout the USSR, producing an average of 150 theatrical features per year, plus 80 to 90 telefilms.

As discussed earlier, each director, cinematographer, scriptwriter, set designer, and producer was required to graduate from the VGIK or its equivalent (such as the Leningrad Institute of Theater, Music, and Cinematography) and then assigned to a specific studio in Russia or the non-Russian republics. Until 1987, scripts were subject to prior approval by the studio leadership, and films were rated by a national censorship commission after production; those not approved—such as Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* or Klimov's *Agoniya*—were either shelved or remade until they were acceptable to the censors.

With the succession of Mikhail Gorbachev (b. 1931) to the Soviet leadership in 1985, however, a more liberal policy was advanced by Goskino officials. Several formerly banned films were released and offered for export for the first time, for example, and the much persecuted director Sergei Parajanov was rehabilitated and allowed to work again (indeed, Gorbachev chose as his first foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze, who as party secretary of Georgia was an outspoken supporter of such "difficult" directors as Parajanov and Otar Iosseliani).

Co-production with Western countries was encouraged—for example, NBC's eight-hour mini-series *Peter the Great* (Marvin J. Chomsky and Lawrence Schiller, 1986) was shot on location in the Soviet Union—as was foreign-location shooting of Soviet films, such as Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice* (1986), produced in Sweden with British, Swedish, and Soviet capital. The Gorbachev regime even ended the freeze on VCRs imposed under Brezhnev in the late 1970s, enabling Soviet citizens to see on cassette foreign films that were officially banned from public exhibition. (Wajda's *Man of Iron* [1981] and Forman's *Amadeus* [1984], for instance, were extremely popular on video.)

These were welcome changes, but they were thought to be largely cosmetic until 1986, which marked a major turning point for Soviet cinema. In that year, Gorbachev announced a serious bid to change the nature of Soviet society through a new *glasnost* ("openness") and *perestroika* ("restructuring"), and the Film Workers Union responded in May by ousting two-thirds of its leadership and replacing old-guard president Lev Kulijanov with the dynamic Elem Klimov, whose films were among the most shelved of any contemporary *cinéaste*.

In December, the conservative Brezhnev-era bureaucrat Fillip Ermash was replaced as head of Goskino, the state film committee, by the liberal Alexander Kamshalov, and all studios acquired the right to plan their own yearly production schedules and to move toward self-financing. Finally, calls to abolish the long-standing system of postproduction censorship



Natalya Negoda and Aleksandra Tabakova in *Little Vera* (*Malen'kaia Vera*; Vasili Pichul, 1987).



Aleksei Ananishnov and Gudrun Geyer in *Mother and Son* (*Mat i syn*; Aleksandr Sokurov, 1997), shot through one of the special refracting lenses that Sokurov and cinematographer Alexei Fyodorov used throughout the film.

met with success in 1987, when twenty-five shelved features were officially released in their homeland for the first time, many at the Moscow Film Festival for that year. In addition to permitting the release of suppressed films, glasnost encouraged the production of outspoken and/or stylistically innovative new Russian features.

Pitched toward mass taste were glasnost-era blockbusters (*boeviki*) such as Alla Surikova's (b. 1940) *The Man from the Boulevard des Capucines* (*Chelovek s Bul'vara Kaputsinov*, 1987), which sold more than 40 million tickets in its year of release. Also popular were the so-called *chernukha*, or films "painted black," that characterized the late 1980s: Valeri Ogorodnikov's (b. 1951) *Burglar* (*Vzlomshchik*, 1987), Vasili Pichul's (b. 1961) *Little Vera* (*Malen'kaia Vera*, 1988; the first Soviet film to contain graphic sex scenes), and Pavel Lounguine's *Taxi Blues* (*Taksi-bliuz*, 1990; winner of the Best Director prize at Cannes and one of the few "black" films to be distributed in the United States). The *chernukha* focused morbidly on the collapse of Soviet society, often exploiting lurid aspects of sex, violence, and drug abuse in the name of frankness.

Aesthetically, however, the glasnost era was dominated by formerly "difficult" directors. At Mosfilm studio, Sergei Soloviev, the muse and mentor of the Kazakh New Wave at the VGIK, made the carnivalesque *The White Pigeon* (1986), followed by the extraordinary pop-rock thriller *Assa* (1988), the farce of "comic decay" titled *Black Rose Stands for Sorrow, Red Rose Stands for Love* (1989), and *The House under the Starry Sky* (*Dom pod zvezdynm nebom*, 1991), to form what he calls a "perestroika trilogy" titled "Three Songs of the Motherland"—an ironic allusion to Vertov's ruined early sound epic *Three Songs of Lenin* (1934).

At Lenfilm studio, Aleksandr Sokurov (b. 1951), considered to be the artistic and spiritual heir of Tarkovsky, finished his *Mournful Indifference* (*Skorbnoe beschuvstvie*, 1983; completed 1987), based on playwright George Bernard Shaw's *Heartbreak House*, and embarked on a series of philosophical features unlike anything seen before on Soviet screens. With the remarkable *Mother and Son* (*Mat i syn*, 1997), Sokurov reached a new artistic plateau in a visually



Russian Ark (*Russkij Kovcheg*; Aleksandr Sokurov, 2002).

and aurally evocative work about the relationship between a dying woman and her son on the last day of her life. The special filters and lenses used in this film to create refracted planes of light appeared again in the controversial *Moloch* (*Molokh*, 1999), which probes the deeply conflicted psyches of Hitler and Eva Braun at a crucial moment in their relationship in 1942.

Sokurov produced *Moloch* as the first film in a trilogy on the psychology of twentieth-century political power, whose second installment was *Taurus* (*Telets*, 2001), in which Stalin visits and manipulates the dying Lenin, although neither character is mentioned by name, and whose third installment was *The Sun* (*Sointse*, 2005), which depicts Japanese emperor Hirohito in the final days of World War II. Sokurov earned praise for the technical brilliance of his *Russian Ark* (*Russkij Kovcheg*, 2002), a ninety-six-minute exploration of the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, shot in a single take with a specially designed digital video camera, as well as for *Father and Son* (*Otets i syn*, 2003) and a freely adapted version of *Faust* (2011) that won the Golden Lion at Venice.

An interesting development has been the recent emergence of a new Russian avant-garde known as "parallel cinema." Initially an underground "alternative culture" movement similar to Soviet rock, parallel cinema now has its own journal (*Cine-Phantom*) and two distinct subgroups, the Moscow and Leningrad schools. In Moscow, the Aleinikov brothers, Gleb (b. 1966) and Igor (1962–1994), and their followers evolved the irreverent style of "necrorealism," which used necrophilic images and themes to comment on the moribund nature of the body politic, suggesting that the Soviet Union had become by the end of the decade nothing but an animated corpse.

And, of course, the necrorealists were right: the Soviet state was already dead—a condition signaled in June 1990, when the Congress of the Filmmakers Union unanimously voted to reject adherence to the laws of socialist realism—and the state ended in collapse in December 1991. All over the country, glasnost and perestroika had brought with them agitation for increased political freedom—especially in the non-Russian republics, where, in the late 1980s, demonstrations had erupted in violence. In 1989–1990, the example of Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact encouraged the Baltic republics to break away; Lithuania declared independence in

March 1990 but suspended the declaration in the face of a Soviet economic blockade. Mass demonstrations followed in Vilnius and other Baltic cities, and Gorbachev unsuccessfully ordered Red Army troops to suppress them, angering both Kremlin hardliners and liberals.

In August 1991, reactionary elements within the Politburo attempted to stage an anti-Gorbachev coup that ended in failure but made it clear to all that the USSR could not continue to function as a unified nation. One by one, the republics declared their independence and intention to secede from the state, and in December 1991, the Soviet Union was officially dissolved and replaced by the loosely confederated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The impact on the former Soviet film industry was fragmentation, as each of the republics became separate countries with their own national studios and domestic markets. What they lost, of course, was centralized state funding and the vast multinational market that had been the USSR. They also lost access to the systematic training that the VGIK—one of the world's greatest film schools—had provided to their aspiring filmmakers, free of charge.

The deleterious effect on the cinemas of the non-Russian republics has been described earlier in this chapter. Rampant inflation pushed production costs through the roof, while ticket prices went up and attendance dropped radically—problems compounded by a flood of American B-films and widespread video piracy. In 1994, its seventieth year of operation, Mosfilm reduced the size of its staff from 4,000 to 1,000 and predicted an annual output of only 12 films, instead of its usual 50. Worse, the VGIK was struggling to survive, its equipment old and broken, and its students demoralized at their slim prospects for employment.

After 1996, the worst year in post-Soviet film history, when fewer than thirty features were completed, government investment in production increased from 6 percent in 1992 to 90 percent, but by 1998, it had leveled off at 25 percent. In 1999, Vladimir Putin, Russia's newly elected president, abolished Goskino, the Russian Ministry of Film since the 1930s, and transferred its functions to the Ministry of Culture, raising fears that government subsidies would be reduced even further. Yet in fact, by the beginning of 2001, thirty of the fifty features completed since the changeover had received at least partial state funding.



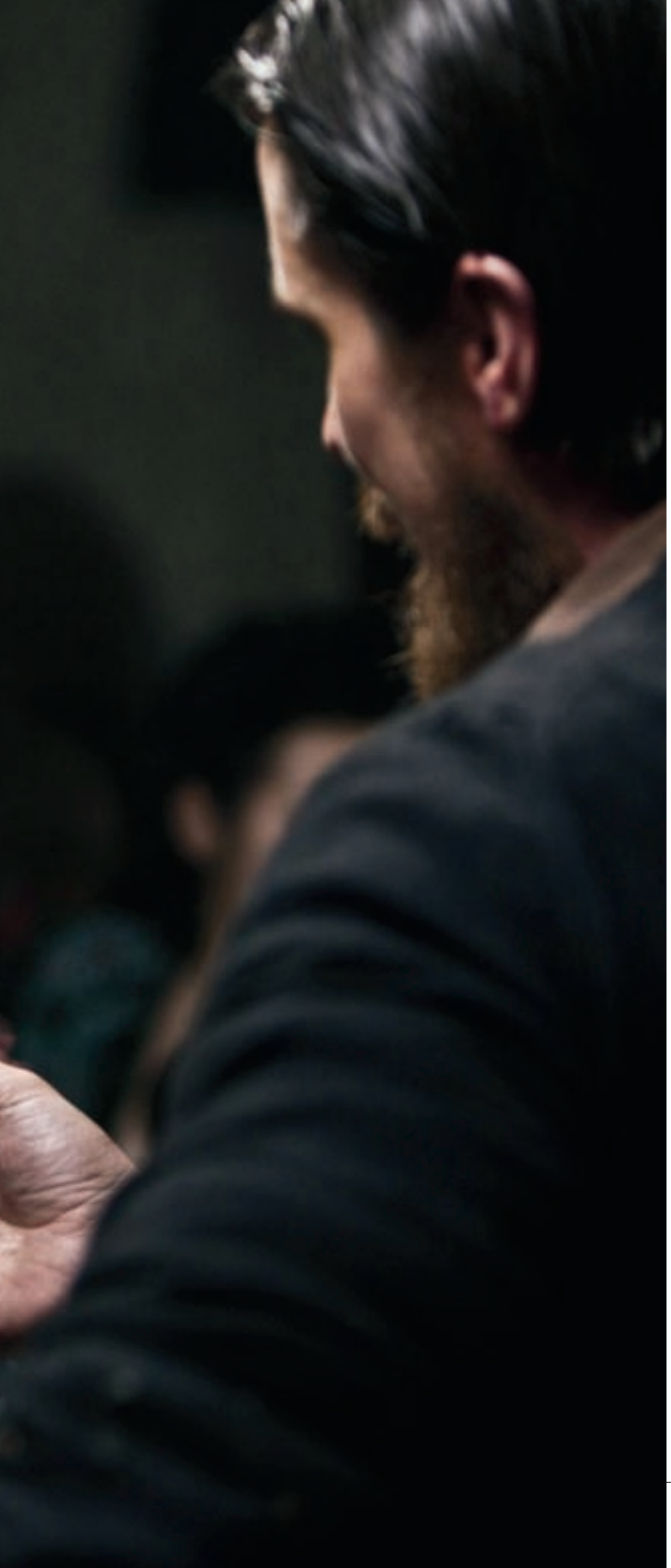
Of Freaks and Men (*Pro urodov i lyudej*; Alexei Balabanov, 1998).

The most promising new talent was Alexei Balabanov (b. 1959), whose two low-budget gangster films *The Brother* (*Brat*, 1997) and *The Brother 2* (*Brat 2*, 2000) were ultraviolent black comedies in the Quentin Tarantino mode, but whose haunting, sepia-toned *Of Freaks and Men* (*Pro urodov i lyudej*, 1998) makes an unusual equation between social corruption and the production of deviant pornography through the new medium of motion pictures in turn-of-the-century St. Petersburg.

Similarly notable was the work of Aleksandr Rogozhkin (b. 1950), whose two satires, *Peculiarities of the National Hunt* (*Osobennosti natsionalnoj okhoty*, 1995) and *Peculiarities of National Fishing* (*Osobennosti natsionalnoj rybalki*, 1998), proved popular at home, while his antiwar comedy *Cuckoo* (*Kukushka*, 2002), set in Finland near the en zd of World War II, won several international prizes. That things have improved significantly for the Russian film industry in recent years is demonstrated by the fact that from 2000 to 2010, total annual box office receipts grew from $35 million to $600 million, approximately 25 percent of which was for local productions.



Ni Ni in *The Flowers of War* (*Jin ling shi san chai;* Zhang Yimou, 2011).



18

Wind from the East: Japan, India, and China

Japan

The Early Years

Japanese cinema, as did most other aspects of Japanese culture, evolved in nearly total isolation from the West until the end of World War II. The Edison Kinetograph was introduced into Japan as early as 1896, and movies almost immediately became a popular cultural form. Yet Japanese cinema went through a much longer "primitive" period than the cinemas of the West (roughly from 1896 to 1926) because of the persistence of an older, more venerable cultural form: the Kabuki theater. Ironically, it was Kabuki that had stimulated Eisenstein in elaborating his radically innovative theory of montage.

Kabuki is a highly stylized and somewhat overwrought dramatic form deriving from the feudal Tokugawa period (1603–1868), and because of its perennial popularity in Japan, the earliest Japanese fiction films were versions of famous Kabuki plays (there exist some 350 of them). As Japanese cinema grew into a large-scale domestic industry in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the stylized conventions of Kabuki became the mainstream conventions of Japanese narrative film. This prohibited the kind of formal experimentation then going on in the



Live Kabuki drama (c. 1981).

West in the work of Griffith, Eisenstein, Feuillade, and Murnau, but allowed Japanese cinema to develop along its own path.

Two conventions of Kabuki are especially unusual, relative to Western films. First, all female roles until well into the 1920s were played by male, professional female impersonators known as *onnagata* or *oyama*, which worked against even the simplest sort of photographic realism. Second, and much more formative in the development of Japanese cinema, was the convention of the *benshi*—an actor who stands at the side of the stage (or the screen, in the case of films) and narrates the action for the audience. In the earliest Japanese films, the *benshi* provided both voices for the characters and commentary on the action.

After 1912, the *benshi* concentrated exclusively on dialogue in response to an influx of foreign films using intertitles, a practice quickly imitated by domestic producers. By 1920, however, the *benshi* had returned to the practice of mixing description/commentary with spoken dialogue—sometimes read from intertitles, sometimes interpolated from the action itself. As scholar Donald Kirihara has pointed out, the effect on film form was immense: "[T]he presence of the *benshi* was a fact that filmmakers could assume during production, allowing them to make films with ambiguous spatial and temporal transitions or under-motivated plots with the knowledge that the *benshi* would be present to provide whatever narrative coherence was lacking." In short, the presence of a human, *verbal* narrator permitted Japanese *cinematic* narrative to remain relatively diffuse.

In September 1923, an earthquake leveled large portions of Tokyo and neighboring Yokohama, including many film studios and theaters. After the quake, the industry, like much of urban Japan, had to be rebuilt from scratch, and one result, as film historian Donald Richie points out, was a new division of production: historical films (***jidai-geki***) were henceforth made in Kyoto, where studios and ancient buildings were still standing, and contemporary films (***gendai-geki***) were made in Tokyo, where modern Western-style buildings had either survived the quake or were subsequently built to replace those that hadn't.

There was, in addition, a turning away from the past and an increased receptivity to modern ideas, especially those from the West. The *oyama* rapidly disappeared, and Japanese films adopted nonnative

styles, such as the newly discovered Western modes of naturalism and Expressionism. The *benshi*, however, many of whom had become stars in their own right, would remain a potent force in Japanese cinema until well after the introduction of sound. In 1927, there were 6,818 *benshi*, including only 180 women, who were licensed to practice throughout the Japanese Empire. Though their stranglehold on the industry was eventually broken by reorganization, there were still 1,295 of them (mostly unemployed) in 1940. Nevertheless, the coming of sound ensured that directors could finally become the primary creative force in Japanese film, as they already were in most countries of the West.

By 1925, the Kabuki-oriented cinema had been replaced by a new director's cinema, consciously divided into two large genres, or types, that persist to this day: the *jidai-geki*, or period films set before 1868 (the year marking the beginning of the Meiji Restoration and the abolition of feudal Japan), and the *gendai-geki*, or films of contemporary life. Both genres are obviously very broad, and each has come to contain a large number of subtypes. Currently, for example, the *jidai-geki* encompasses the *chanbara*, or sword-fight film, which focuses on the figure of the masterless samurai ("warrior"), or *ronin*; the historical romance; and the ghost film. The *gendai-geki* includes such disparate types as the lower-middle-class comedy-drama (*shomin-geki*); the "children's film," in which the inanities and corruptions of the adult world are satirized by presenting them from a child's point of view; and the *yakuza-eiga*, or modern gangster film.

The years 1926 to 1932 saw the appearance of the first major works of Japanese cinema in the beautiful period films of Teinosuke Kinugasa (1896–1982) and Kenji Mizoguchi, and in the *shomin-geki* of Yasujiro Shimazu (1897–1945), Heinosuke Gosho (1902–1981), Mikio Naruse (1905–1969), and—above all—Yasujiro Ozu. In careers that extended well into the postwar period, both Mizoguchi and Ozu became masters of classical Japanese film (which followed the primitive period, from roughly 1926 until the 1950s). The third master was Akira Kurosawa, whose career did not begin until the middle years of World War II, or the "Pacific War," as it is known to the Japanese.

Sound

Sound entered the cinema in Japan more gradually and smoothly than it did in the countries of the West, because it was less of a novelty for both audiences and filmmakers. Japanese movies had always "talked" through the mediation of the *benshi*, and far from retarding the formal development of Japanese cinema (as it had for a brief period in the West), the coming of synchronously recorded sound actually accelerated it by permanently liberating films from subservience to a live narrator. The first successful talkie, Gosho's comic *shomin-geki—The Neighbor's Wife and Mine* (*Madamu to nyobo*, 1931)—ranked very high in formal achievement among early sound films generally. Yet the addition of sound was a leisurely process in Japan. In 1932, only 45 feature-length sound films were produced out of a total of 400, and silent features continued to be made until 1937—the most important Japanese film of 1932, for example, was Ozu's silent "children's comedy" *I Was Born, but . . .* (*Umarete wa mita keredo*). Other changes were swifter and ultimately more significant.

One notable consequence of the reorganization was the complete monopolization of the Japanese film industry by three, and later five, major production companies, called *zaibatsu* ("conglomerates"), through the Japan Motion Picture Producers' Association (founded in 1925), in a pattern remarkably similar to the American studio system. As in the American system, each of the three Japanese studios during the 1930s—Nikkatsu, founded in 1914; Shochiku, founded in 1920; and Toho, founded in 1932—had been formed by the ruthless absorption of smaller companies. And, as in the American system, they existed solely for the purpose of producing films for mass consumption through a highly efficient, rigidly structured production process. This system still operates in Japan today, with some modification, and until the economic recession of the late 1970s, it was the most productive in the world, averaging more than 400 features a year.

One aspect of the Japanese studio system that differed from the American, however—and that differs to this day as part of an ingrained cultural pattern—was the hierarchical master-pupil (*sempai-kohai*, or "senior-junior") relationship between directors and their assistants. Aspiring young filmmakers had to apprentice themselves to older, more experienced directors and literally prove their worth (that is, their ability to turn a profit for the studio) before being permitted to direct on their own. Thus, Yasujiro Shimazu, who founded the *shomin-geki* in the early 1920s, himself had been taught by the first-generation Shochiku director Kaoru Osanai and, in the course of his own long career, trained ten younger directors, including Keisuke Kinoshita (1912–1998), Masaki Kobayashi (1916–1996), and Kaneto Shindo (1912–2012), all of whom went on to have distinguished careers. Another unique aspect of



Hideo Sugawara and Tomio Aoki (also known as Tokkan-Kozou) in *I Was Born, but . . .* (*Umarete wa mita keredo*; Yasujiro Ozu, 1932).

the Japanese studio system is the paternalistic relationship between the director and the entire cast and crew of a film. It seems clear that both the apprenticeship system and the familial organization of production recapitulate an element deeply rooted in Japanese society, which may be best described as feudalistic.

The Meiji Restoration of 1868–1912 provided a brief respite of enlightenment after seven hundred years of feudal culture. In 1868, the fifteen-year-old Emperor Meiji (the word means "Enlightened Rule") abolished the *shogunate*, the military dictatorship that had ruled Japan in the legitimate emperor's stead since 1192 and had been controlled by the Tokugawa clan since 1603, and outlawed the samurai, who had supported it. Yet these centuries-old feudal institutions did not disappear. Instead, the samurai translated themselves into a modern form and emerged in the late 1920s as the general staff and officer corps of a powerful military establishment. By the end of 1931, they had virtually reasserted their control of the government. As sound came to the Japanese cinema in the early 1930s, militarism, patriotism, and xenophobia pervaded every segment of Japanese society. These factors led first to Japan's war of aggression against China in 1937 and ultimately to its catastrophic confrontation with the United States.

War

Through its Ministry of Propaganda, the government imposed a system of state censorship, the severity of which increased as the 1930s wore on. In addition to censoring what it did not like, the Ministry of Propaganda began to actively involve itself in production, demanding war films that showed Japanese military prowess in battle. Ironically, the first two films commissioned by the ministry—Tomotaka Tasaka's *Five Scouts* (*Go-nin no sekkohei*, 1938) and *Mud and Soldiers* (*Tsuchi to heitai*, 1939)—were profoundly humanistic accounts of men in battle that compare favorably with the great prewar pacifist films of the West.



Five Scouts (*Go-nin no sekkohei*; Tomotaka Tasaka, 1938).

After the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the Japanese government issued strict guidelines and established quotas for the production of films on specific national policy themes (*kokusaku-eiga*). Then, following the example of Goebbels in Nazi Germany, Japanese government officials consolidated the ten existing studios into two large corporations under the Office of Public Information to ensure that the guidelines would be adhered to. The result was a wave of conventional war propaganda films, both narrative and documentary. Because little battle footage was available from the Pacific at this point in the war, these films made remarkably sophisticated use of special effects and models to replicate battle action—a practice that became common in such films as the war progressed and that helps explain the high quality of special effects in some of the better postwar Japanese science-fiction films.

As the war grew more intense, virtually all genres, including the "children's" film, were pressed into the service of national policy. Some directors, such as Ozu, protested the war by more or less ignoring it. Others, such as Mizoguchi and Hiroshi Inagaki (1905–1980), avoided militaristic themes by turning to the *Meiji-mono* (historical dramas set in the enlightened Meiji era), but both were forced by the government to make *jidai-geki* set in the feudal Tokugawa period. Akira Kurosawa (1910–1998) began his career as a director with a *Meiji-mono* about the founder of judo, *The Judo Story* (*Sanshiro sugata*, 1943), which the Ministry of Propaganda liked so much (for the wrong reasons) that it sponsored a sequel.

Occupation

When World War II ended on August 14, 1945, much of Japan lay in ruins. The massive firebombing of its sixty major cities from March through June 1945 and the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had resulted in some 900,000 casualties and the nearly total paralysis of civilian life. On the morning

of August 15, when Emperor Hirohito broadcast to his subjects the news that the war had ended and that Japan had lost, there was widespread disbelief. Never in their history had the Japanese people been defeated or the nation occupied, and so the circumstances of the American Occupation, 1945–1952, were utterly unique.

The Occupation forces were led by General Douglas MacArthur, whose title, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, lent his administration the acronym SCAP. SCAP's primary objective was the "democratization" of Japan; to this end, it imposed strict censorship through its Civil Information and Education Section (CIE). Nearly half of Japan's movie theaters had been destroyed by Allied bombing (there were only 845 in operation in October 1945), but most of the studios remained intact, and films continued to be produced. With the officially published vow that "Japan will never in the future disturb the peace of the world," CIE demanded that these films do nothing to glorify feudalism, imperialism, or militarism—which necessarily eliminated the whole genre of *jidai-geki* and encouraged the production of *Meiji-mono* and films of contemporary life. Of the 554 wartime and postwar films confiscated by SCAP, 225 were banned on the grounds that they promoted antidemocratic tendencies, and many of them were destroyed.

Between 1946 and 1950, when the Allies began to ease their powers of occupation, the Japanese could hardly have been said to control their own film industry. In an attempt at demonopolization, SCAP broke up the huge wartime *zaibatsu* in 1946 (they regrouped into five, later six, major corporations as soon as the Occupation ended—Nikkatsu, Shochiku, Toho, Toei, Shintoho, and Daiei). SCAP also attempted to ferret out war criminals within the industry, and CIE dictated the subject matter of Japanese films.

These phenomena were significant but short-lived; of more lasting consequence was the influx of American films into Japan for the first time since the beginning of the war—a time when domestic production was at an ebb (only 67 indigenous films were released in 1946; the figure for 1927 had been more than 700). The influence of Frank Capra, John Ford, Howard Hawks, and Orson Welles on the first postwar generation of Japanese directors was comparable to their influence on the *cinéastes* of the French New Wave. In any case, many Japanese studios during the Occupation found it politic to copy American styles and themes. The only domestic themes thoroughly endorsed by SCAP were those dealing with the new social freedoms made possible by democracy, especially the emancipation of women. Mizoguchi, Kinugasa, Kinoshita, Kurosawa, Gosho, Yoshimura, and Ozu all made fine films on this subject.

During the Occupation, Akira Kurosawa (1910–1998) made four films for Toho—*The Men Who Tread on the Tiger's Tail* (*Tora no o wo fumu otoko tachi*, 1945), *No Regrets for Our Youth* (*Waga seishun ni kuinashi*, 1946), *Drunken Angel* (*Yoidore tenshi*, 1948), and *Stray Dog* (*Nora inu*, 1949)—which established him as one of the great postwar directors. Yet it was not until his *Rashomon* (1950), produced for Daie, unexpectedly won the Golden Lion at Venice in 1951 that the real postwar renaissance of Japanese cinema began.

Rashomon, Kurosawa, and the Postwar Renaissance

Rashomon, based on two short stories by Ryunosuke Akutagawa (1892–1927), is a film about the relativity of truth, in which four conflicting versions of the same event are offered by four equally credible (or equally incredible) narrators. Thus, all four versions of the truth are shown to be relative to the perspectives and self-serving intentions of the individual participants. Kurosawa implies that reality, or truth, does not exist independent of human consciousness, identity, and perception.

Cinematically, *Rashomon* is a masterpiece, and its release marked the emergence of Kurosawa as a major international figure. Each of the four tales has a unique style appropriate to the character of its teller, but the film as a whole is characterized by the many complicated tracking shots executed by cinematographer Kazuo Miyagawa (1908–1999), superbly paced editing, and thematically significant composition of the frame in depth. The camera seems to be almost constantly in motion, much of it violent, and Kurosawa uses many subjective shots to represent "reality" from the perspective of the individual narrators. Ironically, the Japanese had been somewhat reluctant to enter *Rashomon* in the Venice Festival, thinking that foreigners would misunderstand it. They were as amazed as they were pleased when the film won the Golden Lion, but their industry was quick to capitalize on its success.

From 1951 through the present, the Japanese have consistently submitted entries to international film

(right) Toshiro Mifune and Machiko Kyō in *Rashomon* (Akira Kurosawa, 1950).





Toshiro Mifune in *Seven Samurai* (*Shichinin no samurai*; Akira Kurosawa, 1954).

festivals, and they have achieved recognition and respect for their cinema all over the world. Between 1951 and 1965, as vast new export markets opened in the West and as Japanese films won prizes in festival after festival, Japanese cinema experienced a renaissance unprecedented in the history of any national cinema. Established figures, such as Mizoguchi and Ozu, produced their greatest work during this period, and relatively new figures, such as Kurosawa, Shindo, Ichikawa, and Kobayashi, all made films that stand among the classics of the international cinema.

Kurosawa became the most famous Japanese director in the West, perhaps because his films are more Western in construction than those of his peers. He followed *Rashomon* with the brilliant *shomin-geki—Ikiru* (*Living/To Live*, 1952)—a fatalistic yet ultimately affirmative account of the last months of a minor bureaucrat dying of cancer. *Ikiru* was made for Toho, which would produce and/or distribute all of Kurosawa's films but one from 1952 to 1991. In 1954, Kurosawa produced the epic *jidai-geki—Seven Samurai* (*Shichinin no samurai*)—which many critics regard as his greatest work. More than eighteen months in production, this spectacular and deeply humanistic film tells the story of a small village that hires seven unemployed samurai to defend it against bandit raids in sixteenth-century Japan, an era in which the samurai as a class were rapidly dying out (in fact, the bandits are themselves unemployed samurai).

As an epic, *Seven Samurai* clearly ranks with the greatest films of Griffith and Eisenstein, and cinematically it is a stunning achievement. The entire film is a tapestry of motion. Complicated tracking shots compete with equally elaborate and fast-paced editing to create a prevailing tempo that is like that of war punctuated by ever shorter intervals of peace. For

the battle between bandits and samurai that concludes the film, Kurosawa created a montage sequence that rivals the massacre on the Odessa steps in *Battleship Potemkin* in its combination of rapid tracking shots and telephoto close-ups of the action at various decelerated camera speeds. *Seven Samurai* was honored on a global scale: it received the Kinema Jumpo Award in Japan, the Silver Lion at Venice, and the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film in the United States. (It was remade by John Sturges in 1960 as *The Magnificent Seven*, with its setting transposed to the American West.)

Kurosawa's other masterpiece of the 1950s was a brilliant adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as a *jidai-geki* set in medieval Japan. Similar to *Seven Samurai*, *Throne of Blood* concludes with an elaborate montage sequence in which the Macbeth figure, Lord Washizu (Toshiro Mifune), is immolated by a hail of arrows. In *Seven Samurai* and *Throne of Blood*, Kurosawa succeeded in elevating the *jidai-geki* from a simple action genre to an art form. After another literary adaptation, of Maxim Gorki's play *The Lower Depths* (*Donzoko*, 1957), he made three superb *chanbara*—*The Hidden Fortress* (*Kakushi toride no san-akunin*, 1958), *Yojimbo* (*The Bodyguard*, 1961), and *Sanjuro* (*Tsubaki sanjuro*, 1962). Though these films lack the thematic depth of his earlier *jidai-geki*, they are masterworks of widescreen composition and rival their predecessors in visual richness.

In 1960, Kurosawa was put in charge of his own production unit at Toho and given complete control of it. Kurosawa Production's first effort was *The Bad Sleep Well* (*Warui yatsu hodo yoku nemuru*, 1960), a film about corporate versus social responsibility in the form of a murder mystery. It was followed by *Yojimbo*; *Sanjuro*; *High and Low* (*Tengoku to jigoku*, 1963), a strikingly formalized film of kidnapping and detection, which contains some of the most thematically complex widescreen framings of Kurosawa's career; and *Red Beard* (*Akahige*, 1965), the story of a young doctor's education in late-Tokugawa Japan. Kurosawa was then invited by Fox to co-produce and direct the Japanese sequences of the Pearl Harbor battle epic *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (Richard Fleischer, 1970; see Chapter 20), an experience that ended bitterly for both parties in January 1969, when the director's footage was rejected and Fox terminated his contract. From this point, Kurosawa Production was not active again until *Dreams* in 1990.

After returning to Japan, Kurosawa gave the cinema another masterpiece—*Dersu Uzala*, a Soviet-Japanese co-production shot in 70mm with six-track sound. Set in the forests of eastern Siberia at the turn of the century, it is a portrait of the friendship between an aging hunter of the Goldi tribe and a young Russian surveyor. By 1977, the film, which was distributed by Mosfilm, had won the Grand Prize at the Moscow Festival and an Academy Award in America. In 1980, Kurosawa completed *Kagemusha* (*Shadow Warrior*), a tragic *jidai-geki* set during the sixteenth-century civil wars; this film was co-winner of the Grand Prix at Cannes in the year of its release, but as great as it was, *Kagemusha* was in many ways simply a test run for Kurosawa's masterpiece, *Ran* (literally, *Chaos*), in 1985. This $10 million Japanese-French co-production, the most expensive film made in Japan to date, was the culmination of a life's work: a stylized, epic version of *King Lear* set in the context of the same clan wars as those portrayed in *Kagemusha*. *Ran* was internationally recognized as the director's most brilliant, profound, and magisterial film. In 1987, Kurosawa announced his intention to retire from directing, as if after *Ran* there was little left to say, although he went on to make *Dreams* in 1990 and *Rhapsody in August* in 1991.



Tatsuya Nakadai in *Ran* (Akira Kurosawa, 1985).

Kurosawa was unquestionably a giant of international cinema. Like Bergman and Antonioni, he was the true auteur of his films—he set up his own shots, did his own editing, and wrote his own scripts. He was probably more conscious of Western styles of filmmaking than any of his Japanese peers and always claimed a great stylistic debt to John Ford. Kurosawa was a professional student of Western painting before he entered the cinema, but it would be a mistake to assume that the Western "look" of his films betokens Western values.

Although he was sometimes mistakenly identified by Western critics as a humanist, Kurosawa was, in

fact, a fatalist, or at least an existentialist, in subtle but thoroughly Japanese terms. His vision of human experience was firmly rooted in the value system of feudal Japan. Zen Buddhism, the samurai code of *bushido* ("the way of the warrior"—loyalty and self-sacrifice), and the master-pupil relationship are all important ethical components of his films. Because of his great universality of spirit, we can recognize ourselves in Kurosawa, but we would do well to remember that Kurosawa also shared many sympathies with Yukio Mishima (1925–1970), the famous anti-intellectual novelist and right-wing militant who staged a raid on the Tokyo headquarters of the nation's "peacekeeping" forces on November 25, 1970, and committed a spectacular act of seppuku, or hara-kiri, there to protest the decadence of contemporary Japan and the declining role of feudalism in its culture.

Kenji Mizoguchi

The directorial career of Kenji Mizoguchi (1898–1956) spanned thirty-four years and encompassed ninety feature films. As did Kurosawa, Mizoguchi studied Western painting as a student, but his themes and visual style were purely Japanese. He began his career as an actor for the Nikkatsu studio and became a director there in 1922. Appearing from a variety of studios, Mizoguchi's first films were mainly thrillers and melodramas adapted from popular literature, but in 1925, he began to make films dealing with the impact of urbanization on Japanese life. Few of his silent films have survived, but those that do reveal an almost painterly evocation of atmosphere and mood. After a politically committed film about the urban working class, Mizoguchi turned increasingly to period films to avoid government censorship.



Yet his two greatest films of the 1930s, *Osaka Elegy* (*Naniwa ereji*, 1936; banned in 1940) and *Sisters of the Gion* (*Gion no shimai*, 1936), have contemporary settings and announce Mizoguchi's main thematic concern: the position of women within the social order and the redemptive power of their love. The films also contain Mizoguchi's first consistent use of the technique that would become the hallmark of his later films—the extended long take composed in depth for a static camera. Critics have compared *Osaka Elegy* and *Sisters of the Gion* with Jean Renoir's prewar films, in terms of both their humanism and their mise-en-scène. Like Renoir, Mizoguchi constantly sought ways to portray internal states through external means, and he felt that in the long take he had discovered what he called "the most precise and specific expression for intense psychological moments." Diagonal composition leading the eye outward toward the world beyond the frame, fluid and thematically significant moving camera shots, luminous photography (often by Kazuo Miyagawa), and minimal cutting are other characteristics of Mizoguchi's mature style, which link him with the mise-en-scène tradition of the West.

During the war, Mizoguchi was forced to make a certain number of government-policy films, although he was able to confine them to *jidai-geki*. After the surrender, he continued to examine the condition of Japanese women. Yet in the last six years of his life, with the Occupation ended, Mizoguchi produced his greatest masterpieces, nearly all of them for Daiei. In rapid succession, he shot five films that many critics regard as among the most beautiful and haunting ever made. *The Life of Oharu* (*Saikaku ichidai onna*, 1952), winner of the International Award at the 1952 Venice Film Festival, is a humane critique of feudalism centered around the degraded life of a prostitute in seventeenth-century Kyoto.

Ugetsu (*Ugetsu monogatari*, 1953), which won the Silver Lion at Venice in 1953, is set during the feudal wars of the sixteenth century. Two ambitious young men leave their wives to seek wealth and glory. In the course of a long and picaresque pilgrimage, they both come to realize that nothing they have gained on their journey is worth the love of the women they have cast away. Simultaneously realistic, allegorical, and supernatural, *Ugetsu* is the most stylistically perfect of all of Mizoguchi's works. With *Sansho the Bailiff* (*Sansho dayu*, 1954), set in the eleventh century, and *The Crucified Lovers/A Story from Chikamatsu* (*Chikamatsu monogatari*, 1954), set in the seventeenth century, Mizoguchi continued his concentrated scrutiny of the feudal social system and its impact on women, although neither film was the equal of *The Life of Oharu* or *Ugetsu*. The last film Mizoguchi completed before his death in 1956 was *Street of Shame* (*Akasen chitai*, 1956), a fictionalized account of the lives of Tokyo prostitutes.

Mizoguchi is popularly perceived in the West, which has seen only about a tenth of his total opus, as a maker of period films. Yet when Mizoguchi looked at the past, it was always as a mirror for the present. His lifelong critique of feudalism, his sympathetic concern for the social and psychological condition of women, and his simple humanism in the face of a callous world are the thematic bridges uniting his period and his contemporary films. Furthermore, his absolute mastery of decor, the long take, and the moving camera make Mizoguchi one of the great mise-en-scène directors of international cinema, a rival of Murnau, Ophüls, and Welles, to name only his contemporaries. Nevertheless, his nearly transcendental visual style finally makes Mizoguchi unique in the history of film.

(left) Kinuyo Tanaka in *The Life of Oharu* (*Saikaku ichidai onna*; Kenji Mizoguchi, 1952).

Yasujiro Ozu

The Japanese director whose work most expresses traditional Japanese values is undeniably Yasujiro Ozu (1903–1963); for that reason, he was the last of the three great masters of Japanese cinema to be discovered by the West. As a boy in Tokyo, Ozu spent much of his time in movie houses, entranced by Italian spectacles such as *Quo vadis?* (1913) and by American comedy, melodrama, and romance (he particularly admired Lubitsch and Griffith). After briefly attending Waseda University, he became a scriptwriter at the Shochiku studio, where he was to work for the rest of his life. Here he soon became an assistant director under the tutelage of Tadamoto Okubo, a specialist in light comedies known as *nansensu-mono*, or "nonsense films."

For a time, Ozu specialized in *nansensu-mono* in the manner of Okubo, but he soon turned his attention to the more serious genre of *shomin-geki*, social comedies that concentrate on the daily lives and the interpersonal relationships of the members of lower-middle-class families. Ozu seems to have chosen this genre because he found in the routine lives of these people—in



The End of Summer (Yasujiro Ozu, 1961).

their necessary ability to cope with hardship—a "sympathetic sadness" at the harshness of the natural order that ultimately enables one to transcend it. In Western culture, the lower middle class has not often been a traditional subject for art but rather, at best, for soap opera and low comedy. In Japan, however, the simple lifestyle necessarily practiced by people of this class is highly regarded as the most authentic, valid, and human way to live, unencumbered as it is by false values, pretensions, and distortions.

Of Ozu's fifty-four films, nearly all deal with the life cycles and life crises of lower-middle-class family members, but beyond this, they are about the impact of modernization and modernity on traditional Japanese culture. Often using the same actors, Ozu's films are, in a sense, all parts of one film that the director was driven to remake throughout his career. Even the titles seem barely distinguishable from one another. To these films of people living restrained and minimal lives, Ozu brought a restrained and minimal cinematic style.

Most of the films he made from 1936 onward take place within the confines of a typical Japanese home. His camera is often motionless, and it frequently assumes the low-angle position of a person seated on a tatami mat, whose eye level is about 3 feet above the floor, as if it were a guest or a visitor in the household. Its attitude is one of calmness, quiescence, and repose. The composition of the frame is inevitably horizontal, and the editing style is spare, with no fades or dissolves but straight cuts only, and with little concern for traditionally fluid continuity. In fact, the characteristic Ozu film is composed of a series of static long takes, in which the dialogue, always written by Ozu in close collaboration with Kogo Noda (1893–1968), sustains the drama. Sometimes, however, moments of stillness and stasis in which there are no human beings at all, occur in Ozu's films. These are Ozu's famed "empty scenes" or "still lifes," and they are extremely important, both to his aesthetic and to international cinema at large.

It often happens in an Ozu film that the characters leave a room to eat or go to the bathroom or to bed, while the camera remains behind in its stationary position to record for a while the empty space that the actors have created by their departure. This preoccupation

corresponds to a concept in Zen aesthetics known as *mu*, which, technically, designates the empty space between the flowers in the Japanese art of flower arrangement, but which more generally refers to the Zen doctrine that the spaces between the materials used to create a work of art are an integral part of the work. So Ozu's "still lifes," which appear in each of his major films, are an integral part of his transcendental vision of reality. Yet they are also of great importance to the formal evolution of narrative film. Through his use of the empty scene, Ozu became one of the first directors in the history of film to create **offscreen space**.

Offscreen Space

There are two ways of conceptualizing the cinema screen. In one, the outer edges of the screen become a framing device for the visual composition centered within it, like the frame of a painting or a still photograph. In this model, the reality of the film is contained entirely *within* the screen, and the edges of the screen are borders separating the film's reality from the categorically "real" reality outside. This way of regarding the screen and the method of composition it demands has, with a few notable exceptions, dominated the narrative cinema of the West until relatively recently—perhaps the last sixty years.

In the other mode of conceptualizing cinematic space, first formally articulated by André Bazin, the screen is conceived as a window on the world whose frame, if moved to the right or to the left or up or down, would reveal more of the same spatial reality contained within the screen. Of course, the screen must contain most of the action most of the time, so this offscreen space must be revealed by camera movement or, more provocatively, by what can be termed off-center or non-centered framing. In this technique, the film frame is made to contain only part of the significant action, or sometimes, as in Ozu, no action at all.

The photos of empty spaces here show two consecutive non-centered shots from Ozu's *Floating Weeds* (1959), which help illustrate the concept. In traditional or centered framing, the force of the image is, in Bazin's terms, *centripetal*—the image is composed so that our eyes are drawn inward toward the vanishing point at the center of the frame. In anti-traditional or off-center framing, the force of the image is *centrifugal*—our eyes are thrown out on the world beyond the frame, a process that suggests the essential reality of that world. Centered framing has the effect of denying the reality of the world beyond the frame by isolating it from us; off-center framing has the effect of affirming the reality of the world beyond the frame by constantly calling our attention to it. In short, centered framing creates an illusion about the structure of reality that off-center framing seeks to destroy. Thus, the latter is an inherently more realistic technique in terms of the way we actually perceive reality. For this reason, off-center framing is often favored by filmmakers who seek to deconstruct what is for them an essentially deceptive, illusionist way of looking at the world and one's position in it.





Centrifugal framing (top) and an "empty scene" (bottom) in *Floating Weeds* (Yasujiro Ozu, 1959).

Ozu's use of offscreen space was somewhat differently motivated. Many Ozu films exploit offscreen space by means of empty scenes, in which the motionless camera trains its attention for some time on dramatically insignificant objects—a vase on a nightstand, a ticking wall clock, an empty hallway—which, because they are themselves meaningless in terms of narrative and theme, draw our attention to the fact that they are surrounded by spaces containing meaningful objects and people offscreen. By showing us *nothing*, these shots draw our attention to the surrounding *something* in the same way, but much more emphatically, that off-center framing makes us aware of the world beyond the frame instead of denying its existence by isolating it from us. It is generally true that the longer the screen remains empty, the more our attention is drawn to offscreen space, as opposed to on-screen space, and Ozu was among the first directors anywhere to realize this.

Another way that Ozu uses offscreen space is by training his stationary camera on some significant action, while significant action is also in progress offscreen. This could be suggested by offscreen dialogue or naturalistic sound effects or, as in many of Ozu's later films, by having the action oscillate between offscreen and on-screen space. In *The End of Summer* (1960), for example, the static camera trains on a mother ironing a dress in full shot, while her son and her father play catch, moving in and out of the frame at random as the game grows increasingly noisy and wild.

Yet for all of this, Yasujiro Ozu was an extremely conservative director. He did not make his first sound film until 1936 or first color film until 1958, and never used widescreen. His films employed only the most fundamental of stylistic devices—basically, those that had been available since before 1914. From this elementary base, however, Ozu made films of great emotional sophistication and subtlety, and he ranks today as one of the great auteurs of international cinema. From 1936 until his death in 1963, he kept the writing, casting, shooting, and editing of his films tightly under his control, building up his own repertory company of trusted performers and technicians. Although he was quintessentially Japanese, Ozu, similar to Shakespeare and Tolstoi, had a single universal subject: human nature. And in the course of his long career he became, as he was recently voted by the British Film Institute, "one of the greatest artists of the twentieth century in any medium and in any country."

The generation of Kurosawa, Mizoguchi, and Ozu also included Teinosuke Kinugasa (1896–1982), whose beautifully photographed *jidai-geki—Gate of Hell* (*Jigokumon*, 1953)—is considered one of the finest color films ever made; and Keisuke Kinoshita (1912–1998), whose humanistic *Twenty-Four Eyes* (*Nijushi no hitomi*, 1954) traces the course of Japanese Fascism from 1927 to 1946 through the eyes of a young schoolteacher and her pupils. Although he directed propaganda films for the government during the war, Tadashi Imai (1912–1991) became a politically committed critic of vestigial feudalism and a prolific exponent of neorealism. His three-part *Muddy Waters* (*Nigori*, 1953), for example, is an exposé of political and social repression during the "liberal" Meiji Restoration.

The Second Postwar Generation

The second generation of the postwar renaissance came to prominence in the 1950s and the 1960s and comprised primarily Masaki Kobayashi (1916–1996), Kon Ichikawa (1915–2008), and Kaneto Shindo (1912–2012). Kobayashi was trained in philosophy at Waseda University, and his early films dealt mainly with social and political problems in a realistic vein. His first masterpiece was *Human Condition* (*Ningen no joken*, 1959–1961), a nine-and-one-half-hour antiwar epic depicting Japan's occupation and rape of Manchuria, 1943–1945. Released in three parts, this humanistic but grimly realistic widescreen film tells the story of a young pacifist forced into the war and ultimately destroyed by it.

Kobayashi's next important films were graphically violent *jidai-geki—Harakiri* (*Seppuku*, 1962) and *Rebellion* (*Joi-uchi*, 1967)—both of which used the situation of an individual's doomed revolt against the authoritarian social system of the Tokugawa period to make serious comments on the survival of feudalism in modern technological Japan. In the uncharacteristic but strikingly beautiful film *Kwaidan* (*Kaidan*, 1964), Kobayashi made carefully controlled use of the widescreen format and expressive color to tell four haunting ghost stories adapted from the writings of



Kwaidan (*Kaidan*; Masaki Kobayashi, 1964).



Poster for *Godzilla* (*Gojira*; Inoshiro Honda, 1954).

Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904), an American author who became a Japanese citizen.

Kon Ichikawa is widely acknowledged in the West as one of Japanese cinema's most brilliant stylists. He began his career as an animator, but his first important film was *The Burmese Harp* (*Biruma no tategoto*, 1956), a lyrical epic about a Japanese soldier whose war guilt drives him to become a Buddhist monk; as was all of his major work through 1965, it was scripted by his wife, Natto Wada (1920–1983). Ichikawa's other great pacifist film, *Fires on the Plain* (*Nobi*, 1959), is set during the last days of the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, when the remnants of the decimated Japanese army turned to murder and cannibalism in order to survive. *Conflagration* (*Enjo*, 1958), adapted from a novel by Yukio Mishima, tells the true story of a young Buddhist novitiate who burns down the Temple of the Golden Pavilion at Kyoto in disgust at the worldly corruption that surrounds him. *Alone in the Pacific* (*Taiheiyo hitoribochi*, 1963) is based on the true story of a young man who sailed the Pacific from Osaka to San Francisco in three months, and the monumental documentary *Tokyo Olympiad* (1965) compares favorably with Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* (1936). *The Wanderers* (*Matatabi*, 1973) is generically a nineteenth-century *chanbara*, yet many critics saw it as the consummation of his career to date, in its combination of savage irony, technical mastery, and lush compositional beauty.

The Makioka Sisters (*Sasame yuki*, 1983) is a poignant family epic set in the 1920s, based on the classic novel by Junichiro Tanizaki and arguably the director's most important film since the 1960s. Remarkably, Ichikawa continued directing into his eighties, producing for Toho a remake of *Chushingura* (Hiroshi Inagaki, 1962) titled *47 Ronin* (*Shijushichinin no shikaku*, 1994) to celebrate the one-hundredth anniversary of the invention of the cinema, and *Dora-heita* (1999), an old-fashioned samurai film about a new magistrate who is

sent to root out corruption in a lawless town, from a script written by Ichikawa, Kurosawa, Kinoshita, and Kobayashi in their collective configuration as Yonki no kai in 1969–1970.

Kaneto Shindo began as a scriptwriter for Kurosawa, Ichikawa, and others. His status as a film artist is less secure than that of either Kobayashi or Ichikawa, but he made a number of important films. Shindo's reputation in the West rests on the international success of his stylized semi-documentary *The Island* (*Hadaka no shima*, 1961; literally, *Naked Island*), which concerns the struggle of a peasant farming family to survive on a barren Pacific atoll. Another Shindo film that is known outside of Japan is the folkloristic *jidai-geki*—*Onibaba* (1964)—which concerns a mother and a daughter who survive the civil wars of the sixteenth century by killing wounded samurai and selling their armor for rice. *Kuroneko* (1968), a horrorific ghost story, forms a pendant with *Onibaba*. Although some of his work tended toward the sensational and melodramatic, Shindo was a prolific scriptwriter and remains a figure of importance in his nation's cinema.

The popular work of the director Inoshiro (or Ishiro) Honda (1911–1993), whose *Godzilla* (*Gojira*, 1954) started a fifty-year cycle of formulaic monster films (*kaiju*), demonstrated to the world the Japanese facility for special effects. Almost all of Honda's science-fiction films are parabolic: the monster is unleashed through the careless explosion of an atomic bomb, and after wreaking havoc on the urban centers of the nation, it is finally destroyed by Japanese scientists. Working closely with special-effects director Eiji Tsuburaya (1901–1970), Honda made dozens of such films for Toho during the 1950s and the 1960s, gearing them increasingly toward children as the cycle progressed. Other studios attempted to imitate the Honda/Toho monster formula, with varying degrees of success. Daiei did it best with its eighteen-film Gamara series (directed mainly by Noriyaki Yuasa), starting with *Daikaiju Gamera* in 1965, which was released in the United States as *Gammera, the Invincible* (1966). (Most Japanese monster films of this era were prepared in English-language versions that featured dubbed sound tracks and downscale American actors in specially shot scenes and cutaways, leaving the impression that they were American-made.)

The Japanese New Wave

The third postwar generation of Japanese filmmakers emerged during the late 1960s and the 1970s to form a kind of radical New Wave (*nuberu bagu*). Many of them

(right) Kyoko Kishida in *Woman in the Dunes* (*Suna no onna*; Hiroshi Teshigahara, 1964).

worked initially for the studios (Shinoda, Yoshida, and Oshima, for example, worked for Shochiku) and for this reason did much of their early work in some form of CinemaScope, to which the studios had converted wholesale by 1960 to combat the threat of television. Yet ultimately, most of them moved away from the studios to form their own independent production companies. Some characteristic directors are Hiroshi Teshigahara (1927–2001), Susumu Hani (b. 1928), Masahiro Shinoda (b. 1931), Yasuzo Masumura (1924–1986), Yoshishige Yoshida (b. 1933), Seijun Suzuki (b. 1923), Koji Wakamatsu (1936–2012), Shohei Imamura (1926–2006), and Nagisa Oshima (1932–2013).

Teshigahara was an avant-garde abstractionist whose international reputation rests on a single film, *Woman in the Dunes* (*Suna no onna*, 1964), adapted by Kobo Abé from his own novel and produced for less than $100,000. Among the premier works of the Japanese New Wave, this film—which won the Cannes Special Jury Prize for the year of its release—is a complex allegory, in which a young scientist becomes trapped in an isolated sand pit through the mysterious powers of a woman who apparently is condemned to shovel away the sand interminably by hand.

Teshigahara continued his existential probing in *The Face of Another* (*Tanin no kao*, 1966), in which a wealthy businessman is facially disfigured in a laboratory fire and has a lifelike mask made for him by a famous plastic surgeon; over time, the mask begins to warp his identity, changing all of his relationships and finally driving him mad. Teshigahara returned to drama in *Rikyu* (1989), a meditative work about the sixteenth-century Buddhist priest who mastered the art of the tea ceremony and came into conflict with Hideyoshi Toyotomi, Japan's most powerful warlord. In addition to his filmmaking activities, Teshigahara was headmaster at the famous Sogestsu school of flower arranging.

Susumu Hani began his career by making documentaries, which helped shape his later *cinéma vérité* style. Most of Hani's feature films are shot on location with nonactors, and they typically treat the problems of the postwar generation—specifically, the problems of living in a once traditional culture disintegrating under the pressures of rapid social change. Hani's best and most characteristic film is *Inferno of First Love* (*Hatsukoi jigoku-hen*, 1968), in which two teenagers attempt through physical love to cope with the social chaos that surrounds them, only to be destroyed.



In 1978, Hani's former wife, Sachiko Hidari (1930–2001), one of Japan's finest actresses and the star of most of Hani's films, directed her own first feature, *The Far Road* (*Toi ippono michi*), which concerns the day-to-day life of an aging railroad worker, his wife, and his family. Hani himself subsequently made *A Tale of Africa* (*Afurika monogatari*, 1981), a symbolic drama about three people caught up alone in the wilds of Kenya.

Masahiro Shinoda is a New Wave director similarly committed to the younger generation's struggle against society, but unlike Hani, he is a supreme stylist whose sense of pictorial composition compares favorably with that of the "classical" directors of the 1950s. He has made films on every major aspect of his country's history, as well as on contemporary life. Similar to the films of his peers, Shinoda's tend to be violent and nihilistic, but they are also ethically committed and formally precise. Working at Shochiku during the New Wave, Shinoda produced significant films across a broad spectrum of genres. *Gonza the Spearman* (*Yari no gonza*, 1986), for example, is a classical, if bloody, adaptation of an early-eighteenth-century play by Chikamatsu in the *bunraku* puppet-theater tradition, which tells the story of a samurai trapped in the coils of his own implacable code of honor; it won the Silver Bear at Berlin in the year of its release.

Another New Wave director of note was Yasuzo Masumura, who studied filmmaking on a scholarship at the Centro Sperimentale in Rome from 1949 to 1953 and worked briefly as an assistant to Ozu at Shochiku and to Mizoguchi at Daiei before directing his first feature in 1958, a brilliant satire on Japanese advertising called *Battleships and Toys* (*Kyojin to gangu*). Masumura went on to make a broad range of features, all characterized by eye-popping visuals and stylized editing tropes. Among the most notable are *Hoodlum Soldier* (*Heitai yakuza*, 1965), which inaugurated a nine-film series about a *yakuza* (gangster) drafted into the army during World War II and sent to fight at the Russian Front; *Red Angel* (*Akai tenshi*, 1966), a bloody



Eros + Massacre (*Eros + gyakusatsu*; Yoshishige Yoshida, 1969).

antiwar film set in a field hospital during Japan's 1939 invasion of China; and *Moju* (*Warehouse*, 1969; also known as *Blind Beast*), a bizarre tale of a blind sculptor who kidnaps an artist's model and imprisons her in his studio, coercing her into a demented sadomasochistic universe where sight is replaced by touch and accelerated by pain. After a fifty-seven-film career, including copious works of exploitation, Masumura died of a cerebral hemorrhage in November 1986.

Even more significant, however, is Yoshishige Yoshida and his important avant-garde trilogy about twentieth-century radicalism: *Eros + Massacre* (*Eros + gyakusatsu*, 1969), which focuses on the Taishō-era anarchist Sakae Osugi and his female lovers who were murdered by the military police (*kempeitai*) in the aftermath of the 1923 Kanto earthquake; *Heroic Purgatory* (*Rengoku eroica*, 1970), a densely symbolic analysis of student activism during the 1950s; and *Coup d'état* (Japanese title: *Kaigenrei* [*Martial Law*, 1973]), an elliptical biography of Ikki Kita, whose writings inspired the abortive coup d'état of February 26, 1936, in which 1,400 young right-wing officers and troops briefly seized control of Tokyo and murdered a number of prominent civilian officials. (Yukio Mishima's short feature *Patriotism* [*Yukoku*, 1965; also known as *The Rite of Love and Death*] graphically depicts a young officer's ritual act of seppuku on the heels of this uprising.)

Seijun Suzuki, a comedy and action-film director for Nikkatsu, produced a number of youth films (*seishuneiga*), such as *Kanto Wanderer* (*Kanto mushuku*, 1963) and *Tokyo Drifter* (*Tokyo nagaremono*, 1966), that contained New Wave themes, but his main contribution to the movement was *Branded to Kill* (*Koroshi no rakuin*, 1967), a *yakuza* film whose labyrinthine plot and elliptical narrative structure confused audiences and contributed to Suzuki's firing by Nikkatsu. After this, Suzuki became a prolific director of "pink films" (or *pinku-eiga*; see p. 591) although his two beautifully decadent ghost films *Zigeunerweisen* (1980) and *Heat Shimmer Theater* (*Kageroza*, 1981), both independently produced, were critically acclaimed.

At the same time, the former Nikkatsu contract director and Marxist radical Koji Wakamatsu made a successful bid to raise the pink film to the level of New Wave abstraction with his low-budget, independently produced *The Embryo Hunts in Secret* (*Taiji ga mitsuryo suru toki*, 1966) and *Violated Angels/Violated Women in White* (*Okasareta byakuri*, 1967); the latter was inspired by the mass murder of nine nurses in Chicago in 1964. Wakamatsu also produced the bizarre *Go, Go Second Time Virgin* (*Yuke, yuke nidome no shojo*, 1969)—whose point of reference is the Tate-LaBianca murders committed by the Manson gang in the same year—and the revolutionary fantasy *The Ecstasy of Angels* (*Tenshi no kokotsu*, 1972). Wakamatsu directed an average of four 35mm features a year in the decade between 1964 and 1975 (most for his own thinly capitalized production company, Wakamatsu Productions). Some of these were *jitsuro*—lurid but supposedly true accounts of sex crimes—yet all contain elements of style and theme that link them with the underground/avant-garde. He continued to make about a film a year in the 1980s and the 1990s, turning from more conventional soft-core porn to hardboiled *yakuza-eiga*.

Another outstanding director of the New Wave was Shohei Imamura. Characterized by a mixture of fiction and the documentary-like incrementation of sociological detail and by a boldly experimental use of the anamorphic widescreen frame, Imamura's New Wave films have about them a kind of anthropological precision that prepared audiences for such essays in classical anthropology as *The Profound Desire of the Gods* (*Kamigami no fukaki yokubō*, 1968), the latter a narrative analysis of an incestuous family on a primitive southern island (the mythic origin of the story is an incestuous relationship between brother and sister gods).

A former assistant to Ozu, Imamura completely rejected his mentor's restrained camera style and worked mainly in documentary television during the 1970s but emerged at the end of the decade as a truly major figure with *Vengeance Is Mine* (*Fukushu suruwa wareniari*, 1979). A relentless, semi-documentary account of an actual seventy-eight-day murder spree, the film refuses to judge either society, the criminal, or his victims. Imamura's *The Ballad of Narayama*



Sumiko Sakamoto and Ken Ogata in *The Ballad of Narayama* (*Narayamabushi-ko*; Shohei Imamura, 1983).



(*Narayamabushi-ko*, 1983), based on a story by Shichiro Fukazawa about a people in a remote section of Japan who traditionally take their aged to a high mountaintop to die, won the Palme d'Or at Cannes in the year of its release (a 1958 version by Keisuke Kinoshita had adapted the narrative as if it were a Kabuki play).

Imamura's own production company also helped make Japan's most controversial film since the New Wave—*The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On* (*Hara Yuki yukite shingun*; Kazuo Hara, 1987), a two-hour documentary portrait of Kenzo Okuzaki, an aging veteran who demands that Emperor Hirohito apologize publicly to the Japanese people for causing the horrors of World War II. Imamura also produced a restrained adaptation of Masuji Ibuse's novel on the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, *Black Rain* (*Kuroi ame*, 1989), which won the Technical Prize at Cannes. With *The Eel* (*Unagi*, 1997), Imamura won his second Palme d'Or at Cannes for a character study of crime, punishment, and redemption as they affect a white-collar worker who stabs his unfaithful wife and her lover to death in a fit of rage; after eight years in prison, he is paroled to a Buddhist priest in a small village, where he opens a barbershop, talks incessantly to his pet eel, and gradually reconnects with humanity. The meditative quality of *The Eel* extended to *Dr. Akagi* (*Kanzo sensei*, 1998), about a doctor researching a cure for hepatitis in a POW camp near the end of World War II, and to *Warm Water under a Red Bridge* (*Akai hashi no shita no nurui mizu*, 2001), which takes place in a small seaside town, in which a man near the end of his social tether meets a woman with preternatural sexual powers.

By far the most influential filmmaker of the Japanese New Wave was Nagisa Oshima, a militantly radical intellectual who was trained at Kyoto University in political history and law. He joined the Shochiku studios as a scriptwriter in 1955 and began directing there in 1959. Among his earliest work is *Naked Youth/Cruel Story of Youth* (*Seishun zankoku monogatari*, 1960), a virtual paradigm of the New Wave in its expressive use of color and widescreen composition to embody youthful rebellion through sex and violence.

Much of his early work was in the genre of the *yakuza-eiga*, or contemporary gangster film. It tended to be violent, sexually explicit, and politically radical, in that Oshima's criminals were figures in open revolt against modern Japanese society. The malaise of this society was to become Oshima's overriding theme, making him the first major postwar director to concentrate solely on the problems of being Japanese in the present. Appropriately, Oshima rejected his culture's cinematic past, as well as its historical one, so that even his earliest films reveal the influence of the French New Wave, rather than that of his great Japanese predecessors. The use of handheld cameras, *cinéma vérité* shooting techniques, and on-location sound recording is typical of Oshima's early work, although all of his films after 1960 were made in widescreen and color.

(left) Miyuki Kuwano and Yusuke Kawazu in *Naked Youth/Cruel Story of Youth* (*Seishun zankoku monogatari*; Nagisa Oshima, 1960).

By the late 1960s, Oshima had moved away from narrative, and the influence of Godard and the Yugoslav avant-gardist Dušan Makavejev became apparent in his blending of fantasy and reality and in his use of printed chapter titles, voice-over narration, extreme long shots, and audience-alienation effects. As the Japanese critic Hideo Osabe put it, the films of Oshima became "provocations directed at the spectators." Like Godard's, Oshima's films are audiovisual polemics designed to generate in the audience indignation and rebellion at the state of contemporary society.

Japanese society is one in which massive industrialization, urbanization, and technocratization have accelerated social change and caused the disintegration of traditional (and, in Japan's case, centuries-old) values without offering anything in their place. As Oshima saw it, the Japanese family structure so dear to Ozu had degenerated into a series of empty rituals; the giant corporations had destroyed the physical and psychological environment of the entire country; and Japan's cities had become sinks of pollution, overcrowding, and violent crime. In response, the Japanese state had become feudal once more—authoritarian, imperialistic, racist, and politically repressive.

For Oshima, then, Japan was in the midst of a nightmare of social disorder that increasingly courted a rebirth of Fascism. His films were works of aggressive, often violent, social protest. Frequently, the graphic, even pornographic, depiction of sex became a vehicle for his radical indictment of modern, technocratized Japan, as vividly demonstrated in his films of the late 1970s, *In the Realm of the Senses/Empire of the Senses* (*Ai no corrida*, 1976) and *In the Realm of Passion/Empire of Passion* (*Ai no borei*, 1978). *In the Realm of the Senses*, for example, is based on the true story of a former geisha, Abe Sada, who sexually mutilated her lover during the 1930s, and it contains scenes of full frontal nudity and genital exposure explicitly forbidden by Japanese censorship laws. (For this reason, the film's negative could not be processed in Japanese labs, and even as late as 2002, it could not be officially shown in Japan in unexpurgated form.)



Tatsuya Fuji and Eiko Matsuda in *In the Realm of the Senses/Empire of the Senses* (*Ai no corrida*; Nagisa Oshima, 1976).

Ultimately, ideas were more important to Oshima than visual surfaces, and he was frequently accused of having no consistent style. Yet critics often confuse versatility with inconsistency, and there can be no question that Oshima the social critic was also a great film artist and one of the foremost innovators of international cinema. After a hiatus of thirteen years, during which he directed a handful of documentaries—for example, *100 Years of Japanese Cinema* (1995)—Oshima made his last film in 2000, *Taboo* (*Gohatto*), a transgressive and subversive tale of homoerotic longing among the Shinsengumi samurai at the end of the *shogunate* in 1865 Kyoto.

Japanese Filmmaking after the New Wave

Of the post–New Wave generation, several filmmakers have already achieved international profiles, including Yoshimitsu Morita (b. 1950), Kohei Oguri (b. 1945), Mitsuo Yanagimachi (b. 1944), Shinji Somai (1948–2001), Ishii Sogo (b. Toshihiro Ishii, 1957), Juzo Itami (1933–1997), Takeshi Kitano (b. 1947), and Kiyoshi Kurosawa (b. 1955). Morita became popular for cheaply made, breezy comedies but achieved his first major critical acclaim for *The Family Game* (*Kazoku gemu*, 1983)—a hilarious satire on contemporary Japanese family life and Ozu-style "home drama" films, as well as on the nation's educational system. Morita followed with *And Then* (*Sorekara*, 1986), an uncharacteristically serious adaptation of a period novel set in 1909. Since then, he has made films in a wide variety of genres. (Even though Morita's work has entered the mainstream, it is still stylistically challenging.)

Kohei Oguri achieved something of a coup when his first feature, *Muddy River* (*Doro no kawa,* 1981), was produced and distributed privately before being picked up by Toei and winning numerous Japanese awards, as well as an Oscar nomination and the silver prize at Moscow. This unsentimental black-and-white film depicts the friendship between two little boys of the underclass in 1956 Osaka, and it harks back in both form and content to the postwar humanism of Mizoguchi and Ozu.



Kin'ya Kitaōji in *Fire Festival* (*Himatsuri*; Mitsuo Yanagimachi, 1985).

Four years in production, Oguri's second feature, *For Kayako* (*Kayako no tameni*, 1985), is a visually exquisite, formally stylized story set in 1957 of a love affair between a Korean man (Koreans are notoriously subjected to racial discrimination in Japan) and a Japanese woman. *Sting of Death* (*Shi no toge*, 1990), a study of the trauma of postwar alienation on a young married couple, won both the Grand Prix du Jury and the International Critics Award at Cannes in the year of its release, bringing Oguri's work to international prominence. Oguri made only one other film during the 1990s, *Sleeping Man* (*Nemuru otoko*, 1996), which is constructed as a series of intricately interwoven stories and memories surrounding the inhabitants of an idyllic region in the mountains of Japan, gorgeously photographed by Osamu Maruike.

The focus of Mitsuo Yanagimachi's work to date has been the way in which rapid technological modernization has alienated the Japanese from nature, a major theme in a society that still practices a form of pantheism, which is associated with the religion of Shinto. His *The Nineteen-Year-Old's Map* (*Jukyusai no chizu*, 1979) concerns a deracinated student who wages displaced guerrilla warfare against urban chaos through his paper route, while *Farewell to the Land* (*Saraba itoshiki daichi,* 1982) is about a disaffected truck driver who descends to drug abuse and murder in reaction to the sterile industrial landscape that surrounds him.

Yet Yanagimachi received worldwide recognition for *Fire Festival* (*Himatsuri*, 1985), based on an actual mass murder that occurred in 1980 in the Kumano region of southern Japan. There, in an area sacred to Shinto, where gods are believed to occupy both the mountains and the sea, land developers are attempting to build a tourist resort and a marine park; the protagonist, a forty-year-old woodcutter and an avid Shintoist, attempts to fight modernization of the region and, failing that, commits the ultimate self-declarative act by killing his family and himself with a shotgun. Since *Fire Festival*, Yanagimachi has turned his attention to the Chinese. *Shadow of China* (1991) was shot on location by Toyomichi Kurita; *Gohatto* (1999) is about a student dissident who escapes the mainland to Hong Kong

and becomes a powerful businessman; in *About Love, Tokyo* (*Ai ni tsuite, Tokyo*, 1992), an oppressed Chinese student studying in Tokyo runs afoul of a *yakuza* boss; and *The Wandering Peddlers* (*Tabisuru pao-jiang-hu*, 1995) is a Japanese-Taiwanese co-production about a family of itinerant Chinese snake-oil peddlers and their attempts to survive in the modern world.

Shinji Somai was an assistant director under the old studio system at Nikkatsu, where he worked on *roman pornos* ("romantic pornography") before making his first features, which were fast-paced teen comedies. Somai's *Typhoon Club* (*Taifu kurubu*, 1984) brought him instant success when it shared the prize for the Young Cinema competition at the Tokyo International Festival for that year. Characterized by magnificently revealing sequence shots, *Typhoon Club* concerns four junior high school students who are stranded inside their school building by a seasonal storm that becomes for each of them a major rite of passage.

Somai made eight more films before his early death, some of them shot very quickly (*Love Hotel*, 1985; reportedly in ten days) on interconnected sets built on soundstages (*Stepchildren/Snowflakes* [*Yuki no dansho—jonetsu*, 1985]), but all of them relying on extended takes and disruptive tracking shots, in lieu of narrative montage. The most impressive are *Moving* (*Ohikkoshi*, 1993), about a young woman's coming of age as she simultaneously comes to terms with her parents' divorce, which was favorably noticed at Cannes; and *Wait and See* (*Ah haru*, 1998), about a vagrant who poses as a long-lost patriarch and wins a bourgeois family's heart, which won the International Critics prize at the 1999 Berlin Festival.



Takeshi Kitano in *Violent Cop* (Japanese title: *Sono otoko, kyobo ni tsuki* [*Warning: This Man Is Wild*]; Takeshi Kitano, 1989).

Certainly the best known of the post–New Wave directors is Juzo Itami, a former actor who directed his first film at the age of fifty—the black comedy *The Funeral* (*Ososhiki*, 1984), which won a Japanese Academy Award for Best Picture and numerous festival prizes for its mordantly hilarious depiction of how the rising middle class handles one of its culture's most elaborate, expensive, and important social rituals. Itami, who also wrote and produced his own work, continued in this vein with *Tampopo* (1986), a comic film about sex, food, and eating, and *A Taxing Woman* (*Marusa no onna*, 1987), a satire on the intricacies of the Japanese tax system.

Later, Itami directed the comedies *The Gangster's Moll* (*Minbo-no onna*, 1992) and *The Last Dance* (*Daibyonin*, 1993), the former dealing with a *yakuza* extortion ring and the latter with the vagaries of contemporary hospitalization, based on Itami's own experience (Itami's face and neck were slashed by *yakuza* thugs in retaliation for the critique of *Minbo-no onna*).

Itami's last films were increasingly autobiographical—for example, *The Last Dance* (*Daibyonin*, 1993), highly reminiscent of Kurosawa's *Ikiru*, is about a middle-aged film director and an actor who is dying of stomach cancer while having an affair with his leading lady. *Woman in Witness Protection* (*Marutai no onna*, 1997) is a satire about an actress (played by Nobuko Miyamoto, Itami's wife and the star of all of his films) who identifies the murderer of a lawyer investigating members of a terroristic doomsday cult (modeled on the Aum Shinrikyo sect, which was responsible for releasing deadly nerve gas in the Tokyo subway in 1995). She becomes the target of their vengeance, which takes the form of exposing her secret love affair to the tabloid press. Itami committed suicide in late 1997, apparently to avoid a similar kind of exposure.

Takeshi Kitano is another actor who turned to writing and directing in midcareer. Popularly known as "Beat" Takeshi (owing to the fact that he was one of "The Two Beats" in a popular comedy duo in the early 1970s), Kitano began directing with *Violent Cop* (Japanese title: *Sono otoko, kyobo hi tsuki* [*Warning: This Man Is Wild*, 1989]), a brutal gangster film that he took over from *yakuza* veteran Kinji Fukasaku (see further on) and turned into an oddly meditative work. *Violent Cop*, in fact, inaugurated a style and a theme that Kitano would extend through a number of similar works in which he also starred—for example, *Fireworks* (*Hani-bi*, 1997), winner of the Golden Lion at Venice.

Although Kitano has worked in other genres, his signature films are crime melodramas, in which savage



Kumiko Aso in *Kairo* (*Pulse*; Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 2001).

violence is randomly juxtaposed with scenes of Zen-like calm sustained through restrained dialogue and a minimalist camera style. As the star of these films, Kitano has created an antiheroic persona, whether criminal or cop, who is so inured to violence that he experiences it with a weariness bordering on ennui. Kitano's impassivity combines with deadpan humor and mordant wit to produce films that are fundamentally morality plays, despite their copious bloodletting. Intricately structured, yet compositionally severe—at times, even static—they suggest the sensibility of Ozu negotiating the world of Quentin Tarantino.

For better or worse, most of the previously named post–New Wave directors produced their work for major studios or for newly formed independent companies, such as Tanaka Promotions and Kinema Tokyo (both of which went out of business in 1993). Even Takeshi Kitano's first four films were produced by Shochiku until he formed his own production company after *Sonatine*. During the 1990s, however, a so-called new Japanese New Wave arose that circumvented the major studios and distributors to make features on budgets ranging from $100,000 to $1 million, often for distribution to the V-Cine (direct to video) market, as well as to theaters. These new directors effectively set up shop for themselves and in the process achieved an unprecedented degree of artistic freedom, even to the point of establishing their own film schools (e.g., Eiga Bi Gakko, founded by producer Kenzo Horikoshi in Tokyo in 1998). Whereas the mainstream is currently dominated by foreign (mainly, American) products and anime, the new New Wave distribution network is dominated by low-budget thrillers made by directors who typically produce three to five features a year, shooting on 16mm and digital video, as well as on 35 mm.

The most prominent among them is writer/director Kiyoshi Kurosawa (no relation to Akira Kurosawa), who studied film at Rikkyo University under the noted



After Life (also known as *Wonderful Life* [*Wandafuru raifu*]; Hirokazu Kore-Eda, 1998).

theoretician Shigehiko Hasumi and began his career as a Super 8 avant-garde experimentalist. After making several 16mm genre films that showed the influence of Godard, Kurosawa scored a critical and commercial hit with *Cure* (*Kyua*, 1997), a moody, supernatural police thriller that poses questions about the nature of postmodern identity. While continuing to make film noirs on 16mm for video release, Kurosawa turned his attention increasingly to 35mm allegorical techno-horror in features, such as *Charisma* (*Karisuma*, 1999), *Seance* (*Korei*, 2000), and *Kairo* (*Pulse*, 2001). In the latter, for example, a series of mysterious disappearances leads to the revelation that computer users all over the world are being absorbed progressively into the Internet through a series of "forbidden rooms," which function as portals between the worlds of the living and the dead.

Philosophically inflected horror that begins as graphic exploitation and takes an unexpectedly subtle metaphysical twist has, in fact, become the métier of the "new New Wave," in the same way that the *pinku-eiga* was the industry entrée for New Wave directors such as Wakamatsu and Masumura (although porn and ultraviolent *yakuza* fare remain popular exploitation genres in Japan). One key player here is actor-director Shinya Tsukamoto (b. 1960), whose 16mm *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* (1989) and its higher-budget sequel *Tetsuo II: Body Hammer* (1992) achieved a level of urban paranoia and body horror worthy of David Cronenberg. The same pervasive sense of doom pervades the Evil Dead Trap films of Toshiharu Ikeda. These two films were written by Takashi Ishii (b. 1946), who is most famous for directing films in Nikkatsu's Angel Guts series, a cycle of surrealistic rape-revenge thrillers based on Takashi's own adult *manga* (Japanese comic books) of the same title, originally published in 1973.

Other notable "new New Wave" Japanese horror films are *Organ* (1996), about a ring of human organ thieves, directed by the former actress and cinematographer Kei Fujiwara; the films in Katsuya Matsumura's controversial rape-revenge All Night Long series; and the films in Hideo Nakata's Ring series (*Ring* [*Ringu*, 1998] and *Ring 2* [1999]), whose phenomenal popularity gave rise to a Hollywood-style franchise of multiple sequels and prequels. *Ring*'s conceit of a murderous spirit residing in videotape that kills all who watch it was deliberately evocative of the videotaped torture murders in the Evil Dead Trap films.

So, in a different way, was *Audition* (*Odishon*, 1999), by the frenetically prolific New Waver Takashi Miike (b. 1960), who directed twenty-four features and television miniseries between 1999 and 2002. This anti-traditional narrative of a romantic relationship that descends abruptly into a horrendously sadistic nightmare shocked Western audiences at the same time that it picked up numerous festival awards and critical accolades; for Japanese audiences, *Audition* had the additional frisson of reversing the traditional sex roles of its sadoerotic encounters. Other remarkable Miike works include ultraviolent *yakuza* films and *The Happiness of the Katakuris* (*Katakuri-ke no kofuku*, 2001), a musical comedy populated by a family of murderous innkeepers and the zombies they create through their murders.

After directing a series of brooding *yakuza* films, Shinji Aoyama (b. 1964), one of the new New Wave's leading lights, won the International Critics Award at Cannes for *Eureka* in 2000. This starkly lyrical examination of the aftermath of a terroristic bus hijacking in rural Kyushi and its impact on the survivors runs nearly four hours and was shot in black-and-white CinemaScope by the gifted director of photography Masaki Tamura, recalling the sweeping widescreen compositions of second postwar-generation directors such as Kobayashi and Shindo.

Hirozaku Kore-Eda (b. 1962) was trained in documentary production, and his first dramatic feature, *Illusory Light* (*Maboroshi no hikari*), won multiple awards at the 1995 Venice International Film Festival. This restrained but deeply moving account of a young woman's coming to terms with her husband's apparent suicide was shot on location on the rugged Noto peninsula by Masao Nakabori, and many critics compared it stylistically to the work of Ozu and the Taiwanese master Hou Hsiao-hsien.

Kore-Eda infused *After Life* (also known as *Wonderful Life* [*Wandafuru raifu*, 1998]) with the same transcendental sensibility, but with a documentary twist: in the five months before production, he sent out teams of assistants all over Japan to capture on video the "best memories" of some 500 elderly people, whom he then used to cast the film, a fantasy in which twenty-two of the newly dead at a way station between life and death are asked to re-create a favorite memory to carry with them into the afterlife. The staff at the way station turns these memories into films, and *After Life* becomes a complex meditation on the subjective construction of memory and on the role of the cinema in preserving it.

In *Distance* (2001), yet another meditation on death, time, and memory, Kore-Eda explored the relationship among four people from different walks of life united in a common bond of grief—all have lost relatives who were members of an Aum Shinrikyo–like cult responsible for a terror attack on the Tokyo water supply.

Decline of the Studios

The rise of independent production and the New Wave was a consequence of the economic decline of the Japanese studio system. Multiple-channel color television (*terebi*) was introduced in Japan in 1960, and ever since that time there has been a steady drop in film attendance (from 1 billion admissions in 1960, for example, to 150 million in 1980), accelerated by the rise of home video, paralleling the experience of the West. The studios had begun their long, slow decline as early as 1961, when Shintoho went bankrupt. It was followed by Daiei in 1971, the same year that Nikkatsu, Japan's oldest studio, turned exclusively to the production of soft-core pornography, known as *roman porno* (or "eroduction," or "pink film" [*pinku-eiga*]). The remaining three studios—Toei, Toho, and Shochiku—turned increasingly to the production of exploitative genre films.

The mid-1960s, in fact, saw the rise of two new domestic exploitation genres that together came to constitute the industry mainstay for the next twenty years. The first was the *yakuza-eiga*, or contemporary gangster film, which was pioneered by Toei but quickly became a staple genre, replacing the samurai film in popularity among Japanese audiences. The *yakuza* is in fact a kind of latter-day samurai, an outlaw swordsman in the urban jungle, who nevertheless lives by a traditional code; this character type possesses considerable symbolic appeal for audiences whose traditional values have been eroded by a repressive technocracy. Moreover, *yakuza* films are invariably brutal and bloody, and their sensational violence clearly provides audiences with a socially acceptable channel for their hostility and aggression—much of it directed toward society itself. In 1974, some one hundred *yakuza* films were produced by the Japanese studios, which constituted more than a third of the industry's output for that year.

The second exploitation genre to sweep Japan, the "eroduction," or "pink film" (*pinku-eiga*), was a feature-length sex film with a high content of sadism. (Censorship in any form was illegal in Japan from 1966 to 1972, when these films were popularized.) The first such film produced by a major studio was Shochiku's *Daydream* (*Hakujitsumu*, 1964), directed by Tetsuji Takechi, which presented its sadistic sex scenes as part of a hallucination experienced by a young man under anesthesia in a dentist's chair. Takechi then made the far more controversial *Kuroi yuki* (*Black Snow*, 1965) for Nikkatsu, which used violent, nude rape scenes as a vehicle for anti-Americanism (the rapists were GIs), for which he was prosecuted, unsuccessfully, for obscenity.

This was the beginning of a close association between political commentary and erotic representation in the work of the Japanese New Wave, and it marked a change in direction for Nikkatsu, which would soon turn its attention entirely to the production of "artistic" pink films, which it marketed as *roman pornos*. Starting with Shogoro Nishimura's *Apartment Wife: Affair in the Afternoon* (*Danchizuma hirusagari no joji*) in 1971, Nikkatsu made hundreds of such films, using in-house production teams guided by young contract directors, many of whom would become important mainstream figures after their apprentice work in *roman porno*. Other studios followed Nikkatsu's lead: Toei, for example, offering its so-called "pinky violence" line (e.g., Shunya Ito's Female Convict Scorpion trilogy [*Joshu sasori*, 1972]), which subdivided products into the *shigeki rosen* ("sensational line"), the *ijoseiai rosen* ("abnormal line"), and the *harenchi rosen* ("shameless line"). By the mid-1970s, the Japanese film industry was producing more pink films than any other kind.

In fact, between 1965 and 1975, the Japanese film industry devoted more than 50 percent of its total output to *yakuza-eiga* and eroductions, producing some 1,600 of these popular genre films in a single decade. The *yakuza* film remained a staple theatrical genre well into the 1990s, but as with sexploitation and adult hard-core films in the West, the pink film was rendered obsolete in the 1980s by home video recording, in which the Japanese took an early and commanding lead (the Sony Corporation having invented the VCR and dominated its international diffusion). As pornographic

"AV" ("adult video") rose, Nikkatsu saw its own fortunes decline, so that it was forced to declare bankruptcy in 1993. Yet the sadoerotic component in Japanese cinema remained strong in pornographic animated features (*hentai anime*) that adapt *ero-manga* comics such as *Urotsukidoji* (Hideki Takayama, 1987) and *La Blue Girl* (Raizo Kitakawa and Kan Fukumoto, 1992), both based on the work of popular *manga* artist Toshio Maeda.

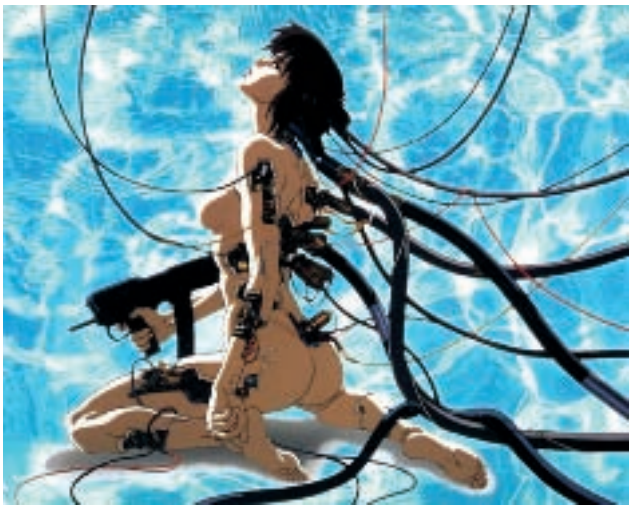
The box-office success of Fox's *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977) and Columbia's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Steven Spielberg, 1977) in Japan led to a glut of cheaply produced imitations, such as Toho's *War in Space* (*Wakusei daisenso*; Jun Fukuda, 1977) and Toei's *Message from Space* (*Uchu kara no messeji*; Kinji Fukasaku, 1978), which recycled the creaky special-effects techniques of 1950s monster films, to the credit of neither. By the mid-1980s, Japan had become the single largest export market for the major American producer-distributors, with Columbia's *Ghostbusters* (Ivan Reitman, 1984) and Warners' *Gremlins* (Joe Dante, 1984) challenging the all-time box-office record set there by Universal's *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (Steven Spielberg) in 1982. Since then, the American market share has hovered at around 60 percent, and Japanese production levels have fallen from a high of 547 features in 1960 to 249 in 1998, of which only 65 were released by the remaining "Big Three" studios—Toho, Shochiku, and Toei. Moreover, in 1996 film attendance hit a historic low, falling below 120 million annual admissions for the first time. In 2006, however, for the first time in 21 years, the box-office share of domestic films exceeded foreign imports, rising to 53.2 percent, largely on the strength of films backed by the major TV networks, who are now the main producers of Japanese films.

Of the Big Three, during the 1980s and the 1990s, Toho successfully revived its Godzilla franchise, scoring hits with *Godzilla 1985* (1984) and *Godzilla vs. Biollante* (1989), and releasing a new Godzilla picture for each New Year's holiday season from 1991 to 1995, ending the series with *Godzilla vs. Destoroyah*, after which the studio sold the international rights to the character to TriStar Pictures, producer of Roland Emmerich's computer-generated imagery (CGI)–intensive Hollywood version, *Godzilla* (1998). (Toho retained the domestic rights, however, and produced *Godzilla 2000* in 1999, when it became clear that Japanese audiences preferred the original.)

Toho was also the distributor for the independently produced comedies of Juzo Itami (see above) and the animated features of Hayao Miyazaki (b. 1941), who had founded the Studio Ghibli animation house with his frequent collaborator Isao Takahata in 1985. Often called "the Walt Disney of Japan," Miyazaki enjoyed both artistic and commercial success, culminating in his eco-fable *Princess Mononoke* (*Mononoke Hime*, 1997), which combined hand-drawn foreground animation with computer-generated backgrounds. It grossed $150 million domestically to break Japan's all-time box-office record, previously established by Spielberg's *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* in 1982, a distinction it subsequently shared with James Cameron's *Titanic* (1997), which edged out *Princess Mononoke* to become the first, later in the year.

Shochiku was not so lucky with its signature franchise, the comic Tora-san series, which had starred TV comedian Kiyoshi Atsumi as a simple wandering peddler in forty-eight consecutive features. When Atsumi died in 1996, the studio faced restructuring; in 2000, Shochiku was forced to sell its long-term base, Ofuna Studios, near Tokyo, in order to cut costs. Toei, whose signature genre had been the *yakuza-eiga* for more than thirty years, began releasing *yakuza* films straight to video as V-Cine ("video films") or OVs ("original videos") and relying on animation produced for television as its mainstay. It was particularly successful with the Dragon Ball (begun in 1986), Sailor Moon (begun in 1992), and Neon Genesis Evangelion series (begun in 1995), all of which were released in some form theatrically and gained a huge following among *anime otaku* (avid fans).

Nevertheless, the Japanese film industry during the 1990s remained surprisingly strong. Despite an ongoing economic crisis, Japanese films continued to hold about a 32 percent domestic market share and support



Ghost in the Shell (*Kokaku kidotai*; Mamoru Oshii, 1995).



Princess Mononoke (*Mononoke Hime*; Hayao Miyazaki, 1997).

a healthy export market. In the early years of the twenty-first century, in fact, Japanese cinema enjoyed a wave of international popularity unprecedented since its postwar Golden Age, grounded not in live-action film, but in anime, which by some accounts constitutes 60 percent of total annual production.

A Japanese coinage of the English "animation" (and sometimes popularly called "Japanimation"), anime combines elements of the Japanese pictorial tradition—silkscreen paintings, woodblock prints, *manga*—with American genre styles and character design. Although animation lies outside the original scope of this book, it has come to assume a new importance, thanks to the rise of computer graphics, which cannot be ignored. Much anime is adapted from *manga,* but beyond that, it can take many generic forms, from Disney-style family entertainment to sadoerotic pornography of the most perverse and violent kind.

Its place in the history of narrative film has been assured by a number of anime features that approach or exceed their live-action counterparts in subtlety and sophistication of form—for example, Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira* (1988), Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* (*Kokaku kidotai*, 1995), Satoshi Kon's *Perfect Blue* (1997), and Hayao Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* (1997), *Spirited Away* (2001), *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), and *The Wind Rises* (2013). The best anime features evince a structural complexity, a visual density, and a richness of theme that give them a legitimate place within the history of Japanese narrative film.

If we look back on that history, especially after World War II and the Occupation, it is hard not to notice that, in general, Japanese cinema is extremely violent. Even in the hands of classical first-generation directors such as Akira Kurosawa, two of the nation's most popular mainstream genres—the *chanbara* and the *yakuza-eiga*—offered up graphic depictions of dismemberment, evisceration, and gore at least a decade before these displays became acceptable in the West. Then, too, of the second postwar generation and everything afterward, it is hard not to draw the conclusion reached by Olaf Moller of directors who have emerged since the 1980s: "Almost every notable recent mainstream filmmaker . . . started out in sex films, either directing (Mochizuki), screenwriting (Sakamoto, Takeshi Ishii, Aoyama), or assistant directing (like the late Somai)."

There is no precedent for this in the West—American and European directors who have emerged from soft-core pornography hardly constitute the backbone of their respective mainstream industries. Yet in Japan they do, in part at least because a disproportionate number of Japanese films are pornographic. According to *Wired* magazine, the Japanese adult-entertainment industry in the early twenty-first century produced more than 5,000 X-rated films a year, most of them on video, and the figure remains more or less constant. So pornography is a good and available place for new directors to learn their craft and make their mark. Within the 35mm industry, the typical *pinku-eiga* is about an hour long, is budgeted at around $35,000, and takes five days to shoot with a skeletal crew—very much like the Hollywood B-film or a Roger Corman drive-in quickie.

This much is clear, but the question of why there is such a voluminous demand for pornography—and why so much of it has a perverse, sadomasochistic, and/or excessively violent cast—is one whose answer lies buried deep inside the cultural history of Japan. Because Japan experienced the greatest economic miracle of the postwar world, its relationship to that history is problematic: in exchange for its astonishing transformation from broken nation into economic powerhouse, it forfeited many things of cultural and spiritual value, and it remains deeply conflicted by this loss. During the postwar period of 1951 to 1968, more than 400 Japanese films won prizes at foreign film festivals, yet, as Westerners, we should not assume that even now we know a great deal about Japan or its cinema.

As Tadao Sato wrote of such directors as Yoshimitsu Morita, Kohei Oguri, Mitsuo Yanagimachi, and Shinji Somai:

> [They] have the ability to depict the subtle uneasiness that underlies Japan's superficial stability. They capture clearly the various contradictions: the confidence and fear, the timidity and pride, the traditional values that were upset in the social revolution that followed World War II, and the simultaneous questioning of modernization and Westernization. Their achievement lies in highlighting the deeper meanings of this confusion.

India

Because television did not exist as a mass medium in India until the twenty-first century, cinema is still the most popular form of entertainment. In the mid-1990s, the estimated weekly audience was 130 million for a population of nearly 1.2 billion people, and since 1971, India has been the largest film-producing nation in the world, accounting for fully one-fourth of the total global output each year. Its film industry—the country's tenth largest—is centered in Bombay, or "Bollywood" (for Hindi-language films, which account for about 25 percent of the total), with substantial production facilities in Calcutta (for Bengali-language films) and Madras (for Tamil, Kannada, and Telugu films).

India produces between 800 and 900 features annually in more than 16 different languages. Yet 90 percent of these films are rigidly conventionalized musicals and mythological romances made for consumption by a largely uneducated and impoverished domestic audience. (Significant export markets for Indian films also exist in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the United Kingdom, with smaller ones in Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa; these markets are sustained largely by an expatriate Indian population that numbered 25 million in 2012.)

The formula has been described as "a star, six songs, and three dances"—usually about three hours long and in garish color. The Indian film industry is dominated today by a star system similar to that of Hollywood's early years, and the cinematic quality of the star vehicles matters less to Indian audiences than their value as spectacle—and those audiences are huge, accounting for more than 6 billion theater admissions per year. Despite these conditions, India has managed to produce some filmmakers of extraordinary talent in the last few decades and, in Satyajit Ray, at least one contemporary director of major international stature.

The current structure of the mainstream Indian commercial film industry—the only major industry in the world to develop under colonial rule—was engendered by the coming of sound. The audience for Indian silent cinema had consisted of hundreds of thousands of Indians, Burmese, and Ceylonese, who spoke many different tongues. Yet with sound, production was initially forced to fragment into regional language groups, of which, within India alone, there were no fewer than twenty-six, fifteen of them official ones. Even the majority Hindi-speaking market of 140 million people had at least three separate dialects.

Under these conditions, the first talking feature, the Hindi music drama *Alam Ara* (*Beauty of the World*; Ardeshir Irani, 1931), might well have plunged the industry into chaos. Yet instead the film was a huge success—as indeed were all early Indian sound films—heralding an unprecedented boom. The reason was grounded deep in Indian culture: sound permitted a revival of the vastly popular folk-music drama of



Bollywood stars Madhuri Dixit and Aishwarya Rai dance and sing in the incredibly successful *Devdas* (Sanjay Leela Bhansali, 2002).

the nineteenth century (itself based on centuries-old religious myths), which had been, literally, "all-talking, all-singing, all-dancing."

Between 1931 and 1932, the resurgence of this form on the screen played an enormous role in winning widespread acceptance for the Indian sound film, despite language barriers. Although most Indian sound films were produced for domestic consumption and seemed to exist mainly as an excuse for musical performance and representation, the Indian film industry nevertheless became a powerful entity during the transition to sound: from producing 28 films in 1931 (23 of which were in Hindi, 3 in Bengali, and 1 each in Tamil and Telugu), it was producing 233 in 1935 in 10 different languages.

As in the United States, the rapid diffusion of sound in India helped consolidate a studio system that was already in place. Yet World War II saw the steady rise of independent production, initially as a means of laundering black-market money. By the war's end, most of the major studios were bankrupt, and the vast majority of production was carried out on an ad hoc basis until the distributor-financiers reconsolidated in the mid-1960s.

After national independence was granted in 1947 and Pakistan was partitioned off in 1948, however, the film industry came under increasing government supervision through the promulgation of official censorship codes, and independent production became the order of the day. With the arrival of color in the industry, there was an enormous boom in costume films and "mythologicals," both perfectly suited to the new technology in the "Hindustani" cinema (i.e., Bollywood films made in *filmi Hindustani*, a colloquial blend of Hindi and Urdu that is spoken all over northern and western India).

Because so many films of this era were financed as one-shot deals backed by a major star, directors experienced a considerable degree of artistic freedom. One such star was Raj Kapoor (1924–1988), who became



a producer-director himself during this period, and while the bulk of his work was romantic and popular, he also made films of social comment (or "socials") in the 1950s, including *The Vagabond* (*Awaara*, 1951). So, too, did his contemporary Bimal Roy (1909–1966) with *Two Acres of Land* (*Do bigha zameen*, 1953). Other interesting filmmakers of the 1950s were Guru Dutt (1925–1964), whose *Paper Flowers* (*Kaagaz ke phool*, 1959) was India's first widescreen film; and Mehboob Khan (1907–1964), whose epic *Mother India* (*Bharat Mata*, 1957) is widely regarded as the Indian *Gone with the Wind*.

The Golden Age of "Hindustani" film was roughly from 1940 to 1960, but Bollywood became an international phenomenon during the next few decades, producing multigeneric hits such as *Sholay* (*Flames*; Ramesh Sippy, 1975), a two-hundred-and-four-minute Hollywood-influenced "curry Western" that played nonstop domestically for nearly five years and became India's most profitable film to date. Like most Bollywood films, *Sholay*, though ostensibly an action film, was full of carnivalesque song-and-dance routines.

Another immensely popular "curry Western" was *God Is My Witness* (*Khuda gawah*; Mukul S. Anand, 1992). The film mixes several action genres with epic spectacle and lavish musical production numbers, including a pitched battle between hundreds of singing, saber-wielding Afghan horsemen. When Hollywood films began to erode India's domestic market in the 1990s, Bollywood's musicals became increasingly Westernized—for example, *The Heart Is Crazy/Somewhere, Someone Waits for You* (*Dil to pagal hai*; Yash Chopra, 1997), whose college scenes were patterned after the popular American television series *Beverly Hills 90210*; and *Something Happens* (*Kuch kuch hota hai*; Karan Johar, 1998), which was modeled on Nora Ephron's hit romantic comedy *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993). Yet the formulaic structure of these films, as well as their spirit, remained unmistakably Indian.

By the end of the century, the Bollywood musical form was being widely imitated in the West, providing a major source of inspiration for everything from music videos to postmodern musical features such as Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge!* (2001). Yet during the 1950s and the 1960s, while Bollywood was still a local enterprise, a filmmaker of singular talent and vision was claiming international attention for Indian cinema: Satyajit Ray (1921–1992).

(left) Nargis in *Mother India* (*Bharat Mata*; Mehboob Khan, 1957).

Satyajit Ray

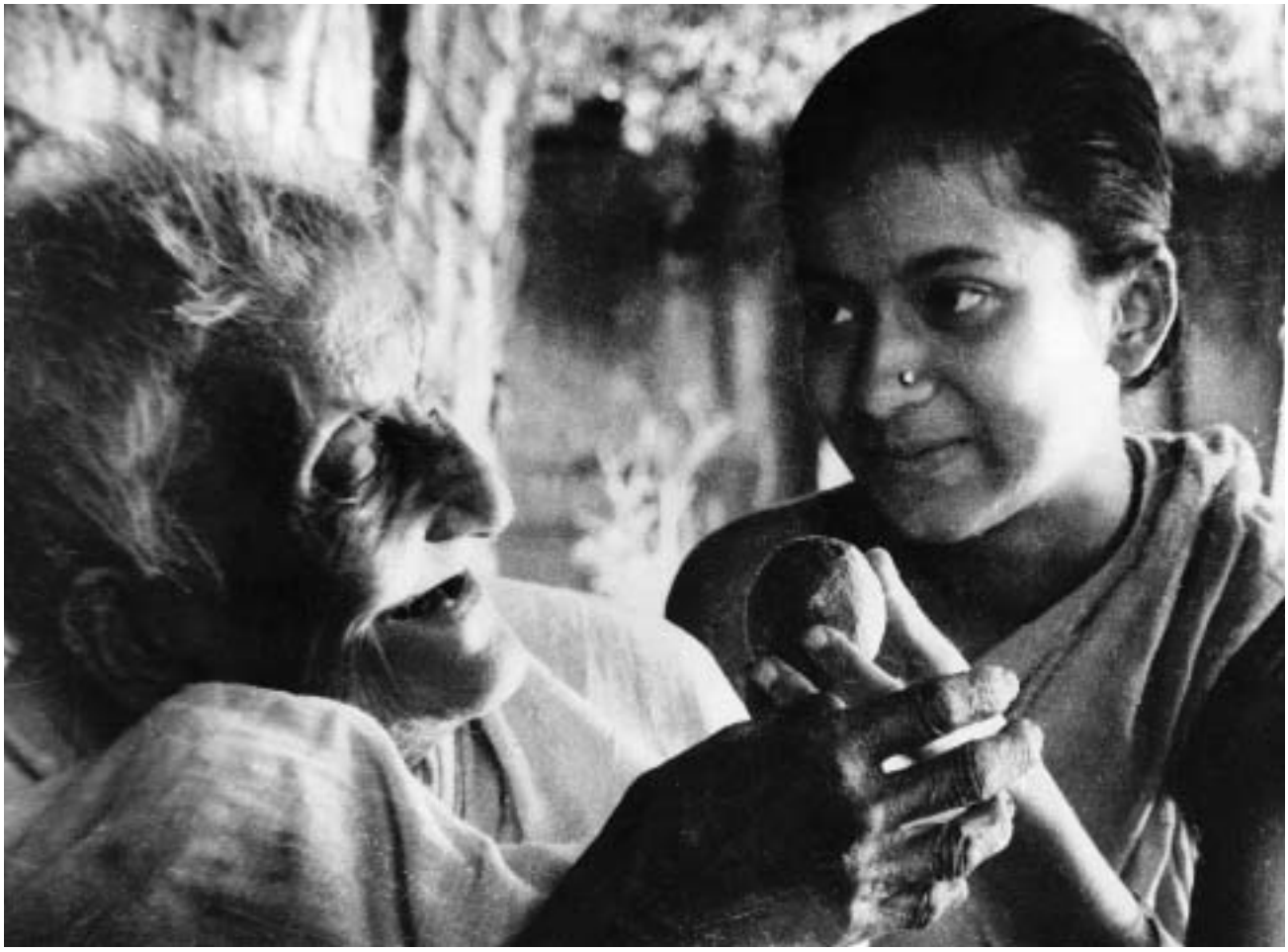
As a young man, Ray studied painting with the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) and then worked for a while for the Calcutta branch of a British advertising agency as an illustrator. Ray's job took him to London for six months in 1950; there he saw Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) and was tremendously impressed by the film and the style of Italian neorealism. On his return to Calcutta, he met Jean Renoir and was able to observe him filming *The River* (1951). After many practical difficulties, Ray made his first film, *The Song of the Road* (*Pather panchali*, 1955), which, to the astonishment of nearly everyone, won the Jury Prize at Cannes in 1956, in addition to becoming a box-office hit in Bengal.

Ray followed with two more films, *The Unvanquished* (*Aparajito*, 1957) and *The World of Apu* (*Apur sansar*, 1959), which together completed the Apu trilogy—a sensitive, humanistic story of the growth of a young Bengali boy from childhood to maturity. Ray's style was neorealistic in its simplicity and directness, and he made brilliant use of classical Indian music with a sound track composed and played by Ravi Shankar. Ray acquired a large international following in the 1960s based on his films. Because his focus fell so frequently on personal relationships and the small intimacies of everyday life, Ray was sometimes accused of ignoring India's pressingly serious problems of poverty, official corruption, and religious intolerance.

In the 1970s, however, he produced more politically conscious films, such as *The Adversary* (*Pratidwandi*, 1971), which deals with unemployment among middle-class youths; *Distant Thunder* (*Ashanti sanket*, 1973), a depiction of the effects of famine on Bengal during World War II; *The Chess Players* (*Shatranj ke khilari*, 1978; Ray's first film in Urdu, rather than Bengali), set during the British annexation of India's last independent princely state in 1856; and *The Middleman* (*Jana aranya*, 1979), a bitter satire about the Calcutta business world.

During the 1980s, Ray wrote, directed, and scored the full-length theatrical feature *The Home and the World* (*Ghare baire*, 1984), based on a novel by Tagore set in 1905, when the British viceroy Lord Curzon deliberately provoked antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal to consolidate his rule; and an adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's socially conscious melodrama *An Enemy of the People* (*Ganashatru*, 1989).

Before his death in 1992, Ray received an American Academy Award for Lifetime Achievement. At the time, he was working on *The Broken Journey* (*Jargoran*),



Chunibala Devi (Auntie) and Uma Dasgupta (Durga) in *The Song of the Road* (*Pather panchali*; Satyajit Ray, 1955), the first film in the Apu trilogy.

a film about a young physician's futile attempts to bring modern medical practice to a backward Bengali village, which was completed by his son Sandip Ray in 1993. Whatever his status as a social critic, Ray was a genuine artist who made Indian cinema worthy of serious attention for the first time in its history. Furthermore, as the last representative of the Bengali cultural renaissance founded by Tagore, he was held in remarkably high regard by his fellow Hindus: the day of Ray's funeral was declared a state holiday, and his last rites in Calcutta were attended by more than a million people.

Parallel Cinema

Ray's Apu trilogy also created the split in Indian cinema between commercial entertainment and art that persists to this day, and it generated great enthusiasm among other Bengali filmmakers, notably Ritwik Ghatak (1925–1976) and Mrinal Sen (b. 1923). A radical Marxist intellectual, Ghatak made only eight films, the best known of which is *Pathetic Fallacy* (*Ajantrik*, 1958), a popular fable about a rural cabbie's love for his aging taxi.

Yet Ghatak's true genius lay in the creation of an authentic alternative cinema. In his semiautobiographical trilogy on East Pakistani refugees, brutal directness belies the rich mythic subtext. His masterpiece, *Reason, Debate and a Tale* (*Jukti takko aar gappo*, 1974), is an autobiographical account of an alcoholic intellectual who must come to terms with the decay of his own revolutionary idealism.

Sen was much more prolific, making films throughout the 1950s and the 1960s, but his breakthrough film was *Bhuvan Shome* (*Mr. Shome*, 1969), which is generally considered the beginning of New Indian Cinema, or "parallel cinema"—that is, parallel to the mainstream commercial industry. Inspired by the French *nouvelle vague*, specifically Truffaut's *Jules et Jim* (1961), *Bhuvan Shome* tells the story of a petty-minded railway official on holiday who is humbled and then



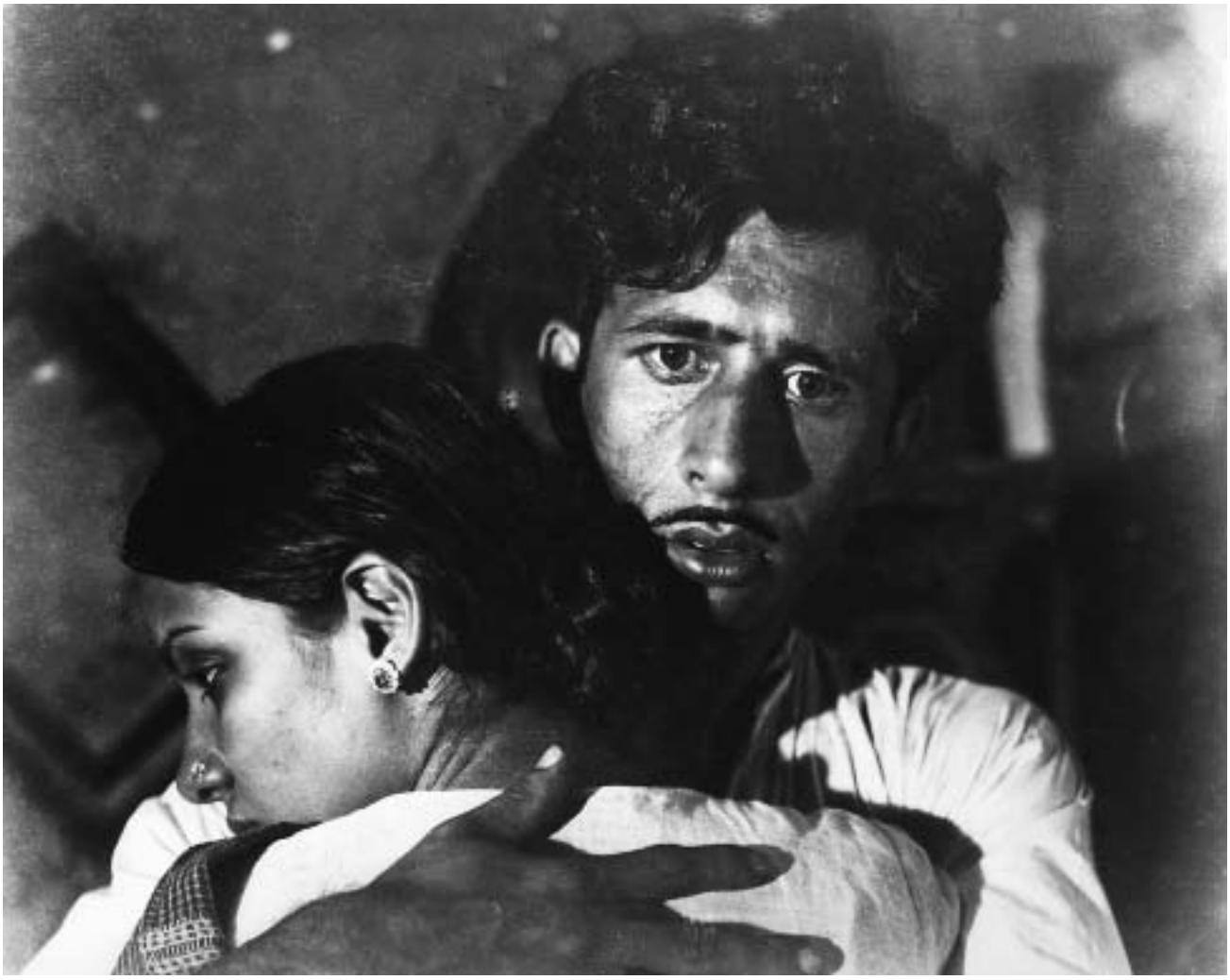
Bhuvan Shome (*Mr. Shome*; Mrinal Sen, 1969).

liberated by an uninhibited village girl, and it was financed by a small unsecured loan from the Indian Film Finance Corporation. This agency had been founded by the government in 1960 as part of a constellation of institutions designed to enhance the quality of domestic films (the others were the Film Institute of India in Poona, established in 1961 to train aspiring directors, and the National Film Archive, founded in 1964), but until *Bhuvan Shome*, it had only supported the work of established figures, such as Ray. The critical and commercial success of Sen's film opened the FFC's doors to unknown directors of small- to medium-budget features.

During the next decade, about fifty-five such films were produced under its auspices. Sen followed his success with the formally experimental *Interview* (1971) and *Calcutta '71* (1972); clearly influenced by Godard, these works mix third-person narrative with direct address to the audience. Next, Sen produced a series of films that deals with the exploitation of the urban and the rural poor by multinational corporations, the British raj, Indian businessmen, and bourgeois leftist filmmakers. With the Indian-French-Belgian-Swiss co-production *Genesis* (1986), a richly beautiful parable of the cyclical rise, decline, and fall of the human race, Sen achieved an international reputation that has been sustained through his most recent work.

Regional Cinemas

In the late 1960s, the nonstar parallel-cinema movement was basically in Hindi (or "Hindustani") and centered in Bombay. But during the 1970s, regional industries in the southwest—especially, Karnatka and Kerala—began to subsidize independent production, resulting in a "southern new wave." In Karnatka, a state of more than 61 million inhabitants whose Kannada-language industry is centered in Bangalor, the revivial began with Girish Karnad's (b. 1938) *The Forest* (*Kaadu*,



Shabana Azmi and Naseeruddin Shah in *Night's End* (*Nishant*; Shyam Benegal, 1975).

1973), a brilliant film about two feuding villages, as seen through a child's eyes.

In neighboring Kerala, India's most densely populated and literate state, where Malayalam is the principal language, the first major work was Adoor Gopalakrishnan's (b. 1941) *One's Own Choice* (*Swayamvharam*, 1972), a film about the grim consequences of a young couple's flaunting social convention. In the 1990s, Gopalakrishnan contributed to India's quality cinema *The Servile* (*Vidheyan*, 1993), a psychological drama about the domination of a weak Keralese by his Karnatakan landlord, and his *Man of the Story* (*Kathapurushan*, 1996) was voted "Best Film" in India's National Film Awards, providing an elliptical political history lesson in its autobiographical account of the failure of Marxian socialist movements in postwar Kerala.

The most commercially successful director of the parallel cinema, however, is indisputably Shyam Benegal (b. 1934), whose feature debut *The Seedling* (*Ankur*, 1974) provided a model for much of the new cinema that followed. This stylistically polished film depicts the exploitation that underlies the landlord-serf relationship in a narrative that is at once realistic and dramatically satisfying. Benegal followed with *Night's End* (*Nishant*, 1975), *The Churning* (*Manthan*, 1976), and *The Boon* (*Anugraham*, 1977), which underscore the link between entrenched feudal power and the sexual exploitation of women.

He then delivered a sweeping and highly successful historical epic of the 1857 Sepoy rebellion in *The Obsession* (*Junoon*, 1978), and he moved even closer to the tastes of the popular audience with such spectacles as *Past, Present, and Future* (*Trikal*, 1986). Yet Benegal's

social commitment is still apparent in such theatrical features as *The Essence* (*Susman*, 1987), about corruption in the hand-loom industry in his native Telugu-speaking state of Andhra Pradesh.

In the 1990s, Benegal continued to produce important work. He returned to the realm of social comment with *The Making of the Mahatma* (1996), a hundred-and-fifty-minute biopic of Mohandas K. Gandhi's political awakening during his years in South Africa and his growing commitment to the policy of passive resistance. More recently, Benegal's *Conflict* (*Samar*, 2000) was selected as "Best Film" in the Forty-Sixth National Film Awards competition; it offers an analysis of India's caste system in the story of a dispute over the installation of a village water pump, which self-reflexively becomes the subject of a documentary on the caste system by some Bombay filmmakers, who inadvertently plunge the village into violence. With *Zuabeidaa* (2001), based on the life of an ill-fated film actress; *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: The Forgotten Hero* (2005), a biography of the founder of the Indian National Congress; and the comedies *Welcome to Sajjanpur* (2008) and *Well Done Abba* (2010), Benegal maintained his prominence as a mainstay of so-called middle cinema.

During the 1980s, several young Marxist directors became prominent in Bengali parallel cinema, especially Goutam Ghose (b. 1950), Aparna Sen (b. 1945), and Buddhadev Dasgupta (b. 1944). Yet many observers felt at the time that India might in fact be moving toward a "middle cinema," patterned more or less on the work of Benegal—that is, films whose political and social concerns are not at odds with audience accessibility and even entertainment. This tendency can be seen in the political thrillers of Benegal's former cameraman Govind Nihalani (b. 1940), the dramatic work of Ramesh Sharma and Jahnu Barua (b. 1952), the fast-paced comedies of Kundan Shah (b. 1947), and the feminist films of Aruna Raje (b. 1946), one of India's few women directors. In fact, though, India has remained, by and large, the home of the blockbuster "Bollywood" musical.

Duing the 1990s, the political stability of India, which has been always rocky, became increasingly



Azharuddin Mohammed Ismail, Rubina Ali, and Ayush Mahesh Khedekar in *Slumdog Millionaire* (Danny Boyle, 2008).



(left) Lisa Ray in *Water* (Deepa Mehta, 2005).

tenuous. The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991 while he was campaigning for reelection as prime minister (a post he had held from 1984 to 1989, in the wake of the assassination of his mother, Indira) brought to an end the Nehru–Gandhi dynasty that had ruled India for most of its forty-four years of independence to date. Then, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), or Indian People's Party, replaced the Congress Party in India's ruling coalition; and in 1998, the BJP formed a successful coalition government in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which was itself succeeded by the Congress-dominated United Progressive Alliance (UPA), which governed the country until 2014, when the BJP was returned to power. India and Pakistan have both acquired nuclear arsenals, threatening regional and global peace in their confrontation over the disputed province of Kashmir.

India itself has experienced massive waves of religious violence between its 960 million Hindus and 240 million Muslims, as well as several sharp devaluations of its currency (the rupee) that have seriously impaired the workings of the film industry. From a high of 938 films in 1994, annual production declined year by year until 2006, which was one of the most financially rewarding in the industry's 110-year history; for more than two decades, about 85 percent of Indian films had failed at the box office, while demand grew for Hollywood product by the domestic audience. Although Hollywood product continues to dominate locally, the demand for Indian films abroad has increased exponentially, so that in 2007, for example, the international market earned $25.8 billion, a 25 percent increase over the preceeding year.

The involvement of organized crime in film finance (about 5 percent of the total) and a wave of murder and extortion chilled the industry in the late 1990s. Nevertheless, Indian digital-effects studios are flush today with work on projects from all over the world, and CGI software companies, such as Discreet Logic Inc. and Alias/Wavefront, have established large Bombay offices. Furthermore, a number of Indian films at the turn of the century broke domestic box-office records and subsequently became international hits as well—for example, *The Terrorist* (*Theeviravaathi: The Terrorist*; Santosh Sivan, 1998); *Land Tax* (*Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India*; Ashutosh Gowariker, 2001), only the second Bollywood film to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film; and *Monsoon Wedding* (Mira Nair, 2001), winner of the Golden Lion at Venice.

Finally, several Indian-born directors have made their mark on world cinema by operating in a global context: Shekhar Kapur (b. 1945), whose successful *Bandit Queen* (1994) led him to England to produce the much-lauded historical biopic *Elizabeth* (1998); and Deepa Mehta (b. 1950), the Toronto-based feminist whose controversial trilogy of the elements—*Fire* (1996), *Earth* (1998), and *Water* (2003; completed in Sri Lanka, 2005)—was shot on location in India and treats various deeply repressed elements of its history and culture.

Futhermore, Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire*, which was shot in India and conceived as an "homage to the Hindi commercial film cinema," won eight American Academy Awards in 2008 and contributed significantly to a revitalization of the industry.

China

Motion pictures were introduced in China by European and American entrepreneurs at the same time as in the West, and the Chinese immediately loved them, calling them *ying she*, or "shadow play." The first indigenous films appeared in 1905, and by 1910, an industry began to form, centered in Shanghai and with outposts in other coastal cities. Sound was introduced in 1929 and gradually gained widespread acceptance.

At the same time, the Chinese Communist Party established the Film Group (*Dianying zu*), whose members infiltrated several major studios during the 1930s and produced leftist-liberal films of high artistic caliber. Often based on works of May Fourth literature, these films tended to be socially conscious melodramas with an anti-Japanese slant, such as *Spring Silkworms* (*Chuncan*; Cheng Bugao, 1933), *Street Angel* (*Malu tianshi*; Mu-jih Yuan, 1937), and *Crossroads* (*Shizi jietoŭ*; Shen Xiling, 1937). Yet the Japanese invasion of 1937 and the occupation of Shanghai forced the Chinese film industry to move south into the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong, where a large outpost was established, and into Southeast Asia.

When production resumed on the mainland in 1945, the focus was mainly on the traumas of the war and the occupation (known in China as the "War of Resistance to Japan"), in such epics as *Spring River Flows East* (*Yijiang chunshui xiang dong liu*; Cai Chusheng and

Zheng Junli, 1947) and *Eighty Thousand Miles of Clouds and the Moon* (*Ba ianli lu yun he yue*; Shi Dongshan, 1947). Meanwhile, a civil war raged between Chiang Kai-shek's (1887–1975) Nationalists and Mao Zedong's (1893–1976) Communist forces; when the latter won in 1949, he proclaimed the mainland as the People's Republic of China (PRC), and Chiang's government fled to Taiwan, which was subsequently proclaimed the Republic of China (ROC) and ruled for the next forty years by Chiang's Kuomintang Party (KMT). Afterward, Chinese cinema, though unified by a single cultural heritage, developed in mainland China (People's Republic), Hong Kong, and Taiwan along separate paths.

The People's Republic of China

In the People's Republic, the period from 1949 to 1966 was one of nationalization and collectivization. The film industry was placed under the minister of culture, and the government undertook to build ten major studios in each of the country's largest cities and to modernize the Northeast Film Studio in Changchun, a holdover from the Japanese invasion. Up to 1956, hundreds of socialist-realist films that celebrated the revolution and the glories of life in the new socialist state were produced. The so-called "hundred flowers" movement of 1957 invited constructive criticism of the Communist Party and briefly permitted the production of such mildly dissident films as Lü Ban's *Before the New Director Arrives* (*Xin juzhang daolai zhi qian*, 1956) and literary adaptations such as Chen Xihe's *Family* (*Jia*, 1956).

This period was followed by a politically repressive "Anti-Rightist" movement and the launching in 1958 of the "Great Leap Forward"—China's second five-year plan, the first having been undertaken from 1953 to 1957. The Great Leap Forward was designed to increase national economic output, and from 1958 to 1959, the film industry was able to double production to 229 features and animated shorts, most of them, such as Zhao Ming's *Loving the Factory as One's Home* (*Ai chang ru jia*, 1958), devoted to Great Leap themes. Between 1959 and 1964, however, the film industry was less subject to politicization, if not to ideology, and directors found themselves able to produce such stylistically interesting work as Zheng Junli's *Lin Zexu* (1959), based on Chinese poetry, and Xie Jin's *The Red Detachment of Women* (*Hongse niangzijun*, 1961).

The early 1960s witnessed the adaptation of a number of classic operas, such as Su Li's *Third Sister Liu* (*Liu sanjie*, 1960), Cui Wei's *Wild Boar Forest* (*Yezhe lin*, 1962), and Cen Fan's *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglou meng*, 1962; itself adapted from a famous novel), as well as novels, such as Xie Tieli's *Early Spring in February* (*Zaochun eryue*, 1963), which had previously been forbidden as a "bourgeois" form.

In 1966, Mao unexpectedly swung his support to the ultraradicals within the Chinese Communist Party, bringing on the ten-year reign of terror known as the Cultural Revolution, during which every social and economic institution in the country was disrupted, and many were destroyed. The impact on the film industry was enormous, as filmmakers, like most other Chinese professionals, were driven into the countryside for "re-education" by the peasants.

Feature production ground to a halt between 1967 and 1969 and resumed in 1970, largely by amateurs working in a single, newly synthesized genre: *Geming Yangbanxi*, or "revolutionary model operas." This form, typified by Pan Wenzhan and Fu Jie's *The Red Detachment of Women* (*Hongse niangzijun*, 1971; a remake of Xie Jin's 1961 narrative feature), was characterized by melodramatic plots, stylized dances, acrobatics, and grandiose orchestral finales to create a kind of *circus maximus* of the revolution. They gave mainland Chinese cinema an unwarranted reputation for egregiousness, from which it suffered until very recently. Professional filmmakers gradually returned from the re-education camps between 1973 and 1976, but political conditions still were such that few films of quality could be made.

Party Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou Enlai both died in 1976, and a power struggle ensued between a group of moderates led by Hua Guofeng and Mao's widow, Jiang Qing. Hua won and briefly succeeded Mao and Zhou, while Jiang Qing and three of her followers (called the "Gang of Four")—now revealed as the real power behind the Cultural Revolution—were tried and imprisoned for treason. Hua was himself replaced by Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997) in 1978, ushering in a period of moderation and relative liberalization for mainland China that ended abruptly with the Tiananmen Square massacre of Sunday, June 4, 1989, and the crackdown that followed.

Political conditions have since moderated, thanks to world economic incentives (such as being chosen to host the 2008 Olympic Games) and China's embrace of mixed-market capitalism, but the government remains authoritarian, and serious human-rights abuses still exist in the mid-2010s. After Mao's death, the state distribution enterprise, the China Film Corporation, eliminated full subvention of production and required each of the country's twenty-two (now sixteen) official



Xie Fang and Cao Yindi in *Two Stage Sisters* (Xie Jin, 1964), a pre–Cultural Revolution film with leftist leanings.

studios to do its own financial planning and balance its own budget.

Also, an "exploratory" film movement surfaced that was both formally experimental and ideologically unbound. In China, it was commonly referred to as the New Wave or "art wave" cinema, because it appropriated techniques of modernist film movements such as the French New Wave and blended them with those of classical Chinese landscape painting; it was closely associated with a group of filmmakers known as the "fifth generation," so named to acknowledge their place in the history of Chinese cinema.

The Chinese divide their filmmakers into generations: the first are the pioneers; the second, those who developed socialist realism in the 1930s and the 1940s; the third comprises those who were unable to study film formally because of the war and the occupation but who entered the industry shortly after the liberation; and the fourth is the generation that studied film before the Cultural Revolution but couldn't enter the industry until the Cultural Revolution had ended. The state film school, the Beijing Film Academy, reopened in 1978, after having been shut down since 1966 by the Cultural Revolution. In 1981, the academy graduated 2,100 students from the fourth generation in acting, directing, cinematography, sound recording, and graphic arts.

The fifth generation of filmmakers comprises those who graduated from the academy between 1982 and 1989, and the sixth generation is made up of post-Tiananmen graduates. A growing number of post–sixth generation graduates are producing films on extremely low budgets with digital video; these are members of the so-called dGeneration ("d" for digital). Because of their training, the fourth and fifth generations are sometimes grouped together as the "academic school."


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This fifth generation of Chinese filmmakers coalesced with the new, more market-oriented production context to produce a new kind of mainland cinema, much of it devoted initially to the trauma of individuals, regardless of class, during the Cultural Revolution.

Perhaps the most exciting figures to emerge in mainland cinema are Chen Kaige (b. 1952), Zhang Yimou (b. 1951), and Tian Zhuangzhuang (b. 1952), all of whom were in the first class to graduate from the Beijing Film Academy since the Cultural Revolution. Chen's first feature, *Yellow Earth* (*Huang tu di*, 1984), marked a critical and commercial breakthrough for Chinese film on the international distribution circuit. It was an extraordinarily poetic rendition of the folk culture of the Yellow River plateau circa 1939, filmed in the flat, impressionistic style of the southern school of landscape painting and the patterned, primary colors of Chinese New Year prints. Chen followed that film with *The Big Parade* (*Dayue bing*, 1985) and *King of the Children* (*Haizi wang*, 1988), the former about military life in contemporary China and the latter about the mistakes of the Cultural Revolution.

In the 1990s, Chen directed *Farewell My Concubine* (*Ba wang bie ji*, 1993; Palme d'Or, Cannes), a sensuously ravishing film that charts the course of a love triangle among two male Peking opera stars and a female prostitute during forty years of Chinese history, from the 1920s to the Cultural Revolution. *Concubine* was an international hit, and it brought renewed prestige to the Chinese film industry. Chen's *Temptress Moon* (*Feng yue*, 1996) reunited the cast of *Concubine* in a similarly themed saga of a wealthy family ravaged by opium addiction in the latter years of the imperial era, circa 1911. The film is rich in period detail and features opulent cinematography by the Australian cameraman Christopher Doyle, a close collaborator of several Chinese directors, including Wong Kar-wai (Hong Kong) and Edward Yang (Taiwan), but it was also controversial in China for its unblinking depiction of drug use and sexual degradation.

Zhang Yimou was the cinematographer for Chen's *Yellow Earth* and *The Big Parade*, and his debut feature was the strikingly shot *Red Sorghum* (*Hong gao liang*, 1987), which won the Golden Bear at Berlin and became a commercial success in the United States. Zhang's *Ju dou* (1990) and *Raise the Red Lantern* (*Da hong deng long gao gao gua*, 1991)—both initially banned in China—are set in the pre-Communist 1920s and deal with the theme of feudalism and the struggle for women's rights in rural settings, and they continued Zhang's painterly, pictorialist style.

The Story of Qiu Ju (*Qiu Ju da guan si*, 1992) offered a change of pace in its quasidocumentary comedy of contemporary village life, shot on location in Super 16 mm (but blown up to 35 mm for theatrical distribution), and it won the Golden Lion at Venice. *To Live* (*Huo zhe*, 1994) chronicles the fortunes of a single family from World War II through the Cultural Revolution and is implicitly critical of the government; it won numerous international awards, including the Cannes Grand Prix, but was censured in China, and Zhang was not permitted to work for two years. He returned with *Shanghai Triad* (*Yao a yao yao dao wai po jia*, 1995), a gangster film set in the 1930s and his final film with Gong Li (b. 1965), the brilliant actress who had been his leading lady since *Red Sorghum* and who became an icon of fifth-generation cinema. Zhang produced two distinguished visions of contemporary China: *Not One Less* (*Yi ge dou bu neng shao*, 1999), which won another Golden Lion at Venice, and the beautiful family saga *The Road Home* (*Wo de fu qin mu qin*, 2000), which won the Silver Bear at Berlin.

Tian Zhuangzhuang's career began with an ethnographic study of Mongolian peasant life titled *On the Hunting Ground (Lie chang zha sha*, 1985) and proceeded to *Horse Thief* (*Dao ma zei*, 1986), a film shot on location in Tibet about the relationship between tribal rights and Buddhist religion. Predictably, the film was heavily cut by Chinese censors.

Tian then made *The Blue Kite* (*Lan feng zheng*, 1993), a muted film about the impact of early Communist rule on the daily life of a Beijing family from 1953 to 1967; it was banned in China, despite winning awards at both the Cannes and the Tokyo International festivals. Following *The Blue Kite*, Tian was prohibited from working in film for several years, and he has directed only three films since: a finely crafted remake of the 1949 period melodrama *Springtime in a Small Town* (*Xiao cheng zhi chun*, 2002); *The Go Master* (*Go Seigen*, 2006), a biography of Wu Qingyuan, the greatest Go (Chinese board game) player of the twentieth century; and the historical epic *The Warrior and the Wolf* (*Lang zai ji*, 2009). Yet he has been active in producing films of the rising sixth generation of directors, who graduated from the Beijing Film Academy in 1989 and 1990, such as Lu Xuechang's *The Making of Steel* (*Zhan ga cheng ren*, 1998).

Like those described previously, virtually all serious Chinese films are adapted from published literary work, because cinema in China is understood and

(left) Bai Xue in *Yellow Earth* (*Huang tu di*; Chen Kaige, 1984).

taught as a form of literature. Yet as China's economic reforms took hold in the mid-1990s and consumption became the driving force of economic growth, Chinese filmmakers found it increasingly necessary to appeal to popular tastes. Mainland films were suddenly in the position of needing to earn money at the domestic box office to make up for their studios' shrinking subsidies from the state, so nearly all of the new films have an element of mass appeal, including the common use of widescreen and Technicolor (the People's Republic operates the only extant Technicolor dye-transfer printing plant in the world, although it does not have first-rate editing facilities, and most postproduction work is done elsewhere, usually in Japan).

Work by rising talents from the sixth generation, most of whom were in their thirties as the century turned, has been notably more commercial than that of their fifth generation counterparts—for example, Wang Xiaoshuai's *Beijing Bicycle* (*Shiqi sui de dan che*, 2001) and Lou Ye's *Suzhou River* (*Suzhou he*, 2000). Annual attendance, once averaging 3 billion admissions per year at some 5,000 theaters, declined from the mid-1980s through 2003, due to both the popularity of television (which has achieved 90 percent penetration in the cities) and the increasing affluence of China's urban populations, for whom the movies are now just one of many leisure-time distractions.

There is increasing competition from foreign films, which the China Film Corporation is empowered to import in an amount equivalent to one-third of the industry's annual domestic feature output, which averaged about 120 for most of the 1980s and the 1990s. Since the late 1990s, the major American distributors have attempted to gain an even larger share of China's



Gong Li in *Red Sorghum* (*Hong gao liang*; Zhang Yimou, 1987).



Zhou Xun in *Suzhou River* (*Suzhou he*; Lou Ye, 2000).

domestic market, leveraging their efforts through Washington's support for China's entry into the World Trade Organization. Yet the Chinese government continues to protect the film industry through subsidies and, until 1998, denied foreign distributors direct control of rental income.

Today, profits from American films are split 50-50 between the Film Corporation and the Hollywood majors, but distribution and marketing are left exclusively to the Chinese. Furthermore, the industry has seen a continuous rise in box-office returns and films in production. Since 2004, annual box-office revenues have increased more than 30 percent and continued to grow at the same rate during the next few years. Annual production reached 330 films in 2006, the highest of any East Asian country. Especially prominent is the category of the Chinese-language blockbuster, or *Da pian* ("big film"), budgeted between $20 million and $50 million, of which Chen Kaige's period drama *The Promise* (*Wu ji*, 2005) is a good example.

Hong Kong

In postwar Hong Kong, a British crown colony at the time, production was carried on during the 1950s by a variety of small- to medium-sized companies that nevertheless managed to produce between 150 and 170 films per year, in such popular genres as the family melodrama and the Cantonese-dialect swordplay (*wu xia*) and martial-arts (kung fu) films. During the 1960s, these were replaced by comedies, urban musicals, and Mandarin-dialect swordplay films, characterized by greater violence and montage-style editing.

At the same time, the Shaw Brothers Studio emerged as a vertically integrated major, with production facilities, laboratories, and dubbing studios in Hong Kong and exhibition chains in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia. Shaw Brothers specialized in Mandarin swordplay films, turning out as many as fifty a year and giving birth to several major directorial talents: Li Han-hsiang (1926–1996), who made *Magnificent Concubine* (*Yang guifei*, 1961); and King Hu (1931–1997), whose Inn trilogy—*Come Drink with Me* (*Dazui xia*, 1966), *Dragon Inn* (*Lung men ke zhan*, 1967), and *The Fate of Lee Khan* (*Ying-ch'un qizhi feng-bo*, 1973)—combined the styles of Peking opera and classical Chinese painting to elevate the swordplay genre to the level of art.

Hu continued to inject the genre with philosophical mysticism in his Buddhist trilogy, produced outside of the Shaw system—*A Touch of Zen* (*Xia nu*, 1971), *Raining in the Mountain* (*Kong shanling yu*, 1979), and *Legend of the Mountain* (*Shanzhong chuanqi*, 1979)—the first of which won a prize for technique at Cannes in 1975. With the commercial success of such widescreen color sword epics in the mid- to late-1960s, Shaw Brothers was able to dominate the markets of Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand.

In 1970, Raymond Chow, head of advertising and publicity at Shaw Brothers since 1958, broke away to form his own studio with partner Leonard Ho, the now-legendary Golden Harvest, which experienced its first great success in the early 1970s with three Mandarin kung fu films starring Bruce Lee (1940–1973); this bonanza ended with Lee's sudden death of a brain aneurysm at the age of thirty-two, shortly after he had completed *Enter the Dragon* (Robert Clouse, 1973) for Warner Bros., produced in association with Raymond Chow and shot on location in Hong Kong.

Kung fu films in general, and Lee's in particular, had a significant impact on the American market during the early 1970s, when they became a popular exploitation genre. Their primary appeal was their skillfully shot and edited fight sequences, which were performed by authentic martial-arts masters according to centuries-old disciplines of self-defense, some of them extending back to the Ming dynasty. These disciplines were integral to the expressive gymnastic style of Peking opera, in which many kung fu film performers and fight directors had been classically trained. Just as Hollywood dance musicals used separate directors of choreography for production numbers, kung fu movies usually employed separate martial-arts directors for fights, and these second-unit directors were often assisted themselves by specially trained "fight choreographers."

Hong Kong fight sequences were traditionally shot in short segments in order to save time and preserve



Bruce Lee in *Enter the Dragon* (Robert Clouse, 1973).

the coherence of the actual fight, as opposed to the Hollywood practice of "master shot/coverage"—that is, taking a single master shot of all the principal elements in a scene and then shooting close-ups and medium shots to "cover" the scene from different angles. This **segment shooting** style, in which action is choreographed and shot progressively, rather than built up from "coverage," is one of the chief differences between Hollywood and Hong Kong modes of production.

After Lee's death, Golden Harvest turned to social satires, starring and directed by popular variety show host Michael Hui (b. 1942), and to Keatonesque kung fu action-comedies with Jackie Chan and Sammo Hung. Both Shaw Brothers and Golden Harvest continued to mass-produce cheap genre films during much of the 1970s; approximately thirty smaller competitors produced even cheaper clones.

In 1977, Hong Kong became the site of an annual domestic and international film festival that was held each April, bringing a new measure of respect to the local industry. Television also became widespread and popular at this time, and Hong Kong's three TV stations all produced their own programming for the local market in their own studios. Television thus became an important training ground for young directors, writers, and producers, who introduced significant cross-fertilization to filmmaking when the first generation of television production personnel began working in cinema during the late 1970s and the 1980s.

The members of this group—most of whom were educated in the West—included Tsui Hark (b. 1951), Ann Hui (b. 1947), Yim Ho (b. 1952), Ronny Yu (b. 1950), Patrick Tam (Tan Jiaming; b. 1948), Allen Fong (b. 1947), Stanley Kwan (b. 1957), and Wong Kar-wai (b. 1958), and they were cohesive in that they all demonstrated a sophisticated grasp of film form as well as a commitment to representing the reality of contemporary Hong Kong, even if that was done in metaphoric fashion. Their first features all used innovative techniques and new visual styles as a means of personal expression, very much like their European counterparts.

Furthermore, because they had been trained in teleproduction, the new filmmakers were skilled at working efficiently on tight schedules within modest



Jackie Chan in *Mr. Nice Guy* (Sammo Hung, 1997); both the director and the lead are important figures from the Hong Kong New Wave.

budgets, which included the early and imaginative use of cost-effective CGI, and they were practiced at shooting on location with light, flexible equipment. Finally, their television-honed audience awareness and their urban sensibility ensured that the city of Hong Kong would become a major character in their features.

During the 1980s, these young television-trained directors joined with others, such as John Woo (b. 1946), Ringo Lam (b. 1954), Sammo Hung (b. 1952), Peter Chan (b. 1962), Wong Jing (b. 1955), Clara Law (b. 1957), and Jackie Chan (b. 1954), who were already working inside the film industry, to form the Hong Kong New Wave. Together, they brought Hong Kong cinema to international prominence in very short order, making films across a range of genres but focusing most intensely on urban crime thrillers, action comedies, and martial-arts fantasy and swordplay films.

Heavily influenced by American directors such as Sam Peckinpah, the crime films offered a unique blend of melodrama and balletic ultraviolence that came to be known as "heroic bloodshed." Hong Kong's film industry was operating at full capacity during the 1980s, producing upward of 160 films a year, not just for its movie-addicted population of 6.2 million people, but for large export markets from Singapore to Seoul. Until recently, Hong Kong was one of the few industrialized nations outside the United States that controlled its own market, so that year by year, domestic films dominated the box office, and in 1992—its biggest revenue year ever, with $160 million in grosses—it briefly became the third-largest producer of films in the world, after India and the United States.

Yet things began to change rapidly after 1993, when Universal's *Jurassic Park* became the first foreign film to lead in domestic box-office revenues since the 1960s. In this same year, it became clear that the pirate video compact disc (VCD) market was seriously eroding industry profits, cutting theater admissions by as much as 40 percent and forcing some theater chains out of business. The involvement of organized crime in production finance (through secret gangs known as triads) had long been a given, but in the mid-1990s, the triads swung their investment support to the far more lucrative



Qin Junjie, Liu Ye, Gong Li, and Chou Jay in *Curse of the Golden Flower* (*Man cheng jin dai huang jin jia*; Zhang Yimou, 2006).

enterprise of VCD piracy, delivering a double blow to the film industry. Production figures quickly told the tale: from making 160 films in 1994, the industry turned out 140 in 1995, and just 100 in 1996. Moreover, an increasingly large proportion of these (e.g., 47 percent of the total for 1998 and 1999) were Category III films—adults-only exploitation films, featuring graphic sex and/or sadistic violence and restricted to those eighteen years of age and older.

Production budgets for mainstream films dwindled from the neighborhood of several million U.S. dollars to $200,000 or $300,000, and production activity became frenetic in an effort to cut costs, with directors shooting as many as three films simultaneously (one each in the morning, the afternoon, and the evening) and stars such as Chow Yun-fat and Andy Lau sometimes appearing in twelve to fourteen films a year. In 1999, Shaw Brothers sold its valuable film library—more than 700 titles, representing much of the industry's postwar history—to a Taipei cable company, and Golden Harvest moved toward liquidating its production arm altogether.

Complicating the situation politically was the fact that in 1984, the British colonial rulers of Hong Kong had pledged to cede the entire territory to the People's Republic of China in July 1997. Dire predictions of a film-industry collapse proved unfounded as the nation's political economy stabilized, and Hong Kong transformed itself into a diversified talent base for the region, a kind of "Hollywood East," as well as the main engine of Chinese-language film production, whose epicenters were Beijing, Shanghai, Taipei, and Singapore.

Among other attractions, Hong Kong had acquired a world-class CGI studio, Central Digital Pictures, which had demonstrated its prowess by creating 550 digital effects for the Golden Harvest fantasy adventure *The Storm Riders* (*Feng yun xiong ba tian xia*; Andrew Lau, 1998), an international hit that made it clear that Hong Kong had become an important site for digital postproduction. By 2000, Hong Kong production was booming again and, with 144 features, had returned to pre-slump levels, but by 2006 the annual output rate had dwindled to 51 films, largely due to American

competition. Tellingly, much of the new production capital came from Internet companies that saw the downloadable digital marketplace as the future of film.

Moreover, Hong Kong filmmakers in recent years have looked increasingly to the PRC for investors and audiences, assisted by the Closer Economic Partnership (CEPA) inaugurated in 2003. Such Hong Kong–PRC co-productions as Zhang Yimou's lavish imperial family saga *Curse of the Golden Flower* (*Man cheng jin dai huang jin jia*, 2006), the most expensive film made in China to date, have the highest box-office profile, although the links go further, from Jian Wen's drama of the Cultural Revolution *The Sun Also Rises* (*Tai yang shao chang sheng qi*, 2007) to contemporary Hong Kong–based thrillers and comedies. In 2007, the government of Hong Kong announced the formation of the Film Development Council, capitalized at $38.5 million per annum, to support local production financing of low- to medium-budget projects by up to 30 percent.

A number of Hong Kong filmmakers have achieved world-class reputations since emerging from the New Wave of the 1980s, among them John Woo, Tsui Hark, Ringo Lam, Sammo Hung, Jackie Chan, Ann Hui, Ronny Yu, Stanley Kwan, and Wong Kar-wai. John Woo (born Wu Yu Sen, 1946) had worked as an assistant on martial-arts films at Shaw Brothers before directing a series of comedies starring the popular Ricky Hui during the 1970s. His breakthrough feature, however, was *A Better Tomorrow* (*Ying huang boon sik*, 1986), which was characterized as a film of "heroic bloodshed" by martial-arts film expert Rick Baker when he first saw it, coining the term that has been attached to Hong Kong gunplay films ever since.

Woo's poetic fusion of the Chinese martial-arts tradition with the conventions of Western action films effectively created a new genre, whose ore he continued to mine in a superior sequel *A Better Tomorrow II* (1987), and in such operatic gangster sagas as *The Killer* (*Die xue shuang xiong*, 1989) and *Hard-Boiled* (*Lashou shentan*, 1992), all starring Hong Kong romantic icon Chow Yun-fat (b. 1955). Woo drew inspiration from such existential action directors as Jean-Pierre Melville, Sam Peckinpah, and Sergio Leone, and in turn influenced a younger generation of American directors, led by Quentin Tarantino, Robert Rodriguez, and Sam Raimi. *The Killer* was the first "heroic bloodshed" film to be distributed in the United States, and its popular success brought Woo contracts to direct *Hard Target* (1993) for Universal, a Jean-Claude Van Damme vehicle, and the bigger-budget *Broken Arrow* (1996) for Fox, starring John Travolta—both of them exciting, if predictable, Hollywood action films.

Yet with Buena Vista's *Face/Off* (1997), Woo brought both the letter and the spirit of Hong Kong–style heroic bloodshed into American cinema. This intricate, obsessive thriller, which involves (literal) identity transference between a maniacal killer and the vengeful FBI agent who is stalking him, contained the director's signature ultraviolence rendered through balletic slow motion, as well as the homoerotic subtext that had characterized his best Hong Kong action films.

After *Face/Off* became one of the top-grossing films of the year ($112 million domestic), Woo took the challenge of delivering a successful sequel to Paramount's vastly popular *Mission: Impossible* (Brian De Palma, 1996). Working with a $125 million budget, one of the highest for an American film to date, Woo crafted *M:I-2* (2000) as a dazzling tribute to Hong Kong's cinema of pure acceleration, full of complicated wire-work stunts and rapid-fire editing, with an admittedly cartoonish plot. Although it failed to generate the blockbuster earnings of the original, *M:I-2* grossed an impressive $225 million domestically and earned Woo a place in Hollywood's big-budget action-director hierarchy.

Tsui Hark (pronounced "Choy Hok") is a producer, as well as a director, and since the 1980s, has been a major force in the development of Hong Kong cinema. Born Tsui Man-kong in Vietnam in 1951, Tsui attended the University of Texas and worked as a documentary filmmaker in New York City before returning to Hong Kong in 1977 to work as a television producer, and then as a founding figure of New Wave cinema. During this time, his most important work as a director was Golden Harvest's *Zu: Warriors of the Magic Mountains* (*Shu shan*, 1983), a sword-and-sorcery epic reminiscent



Chow Yun-fat and Danny Lee in *The Killer* (*Die xue shuang xiong*; John Woo, 1989).



Jet Li in *Once Upon a Time in China* (*Wong Fei-hung ji yi*; Tsui Hark, 1991).

of *Star Wars*, for which he imported four American special-effects experts, introducing optical effects to Hong Kong cinema.

Dissatisfied with local studio practice, Tsui and his wife, Nansun Shi, founded their own company, Film Workshop, in 1984, which went on to become one of the most successful small studios in Hong Kong; and in 1986, Tsui founded Cinefex Workshop, Hong Kong's first full-service special-effects house, which would sustain hundreds of domestic fantasy and swordplay films during the next few decades. Tsui's next achievement was *Peking Opera Blues* (*Do ma daan*, 1986), a comedy-drama about three women from different walks of life during the Chinese revolution of 1913. Its flamboyant style of "controlled chaos" (Tsui) and generic hybridity made it a hit on the Western art-house circuit, calling unprecedented international attention to Hong Kong's New Wave cinema.

In that same year, Tsui produced John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow* and directed *A Chinese Ghost Story* (*Sinnui yauman*, 1991), an atmospheric and colorful supernatural love story that proved popular and engendered two numbered sequels in 1990 and 1991, both directed by Tsui, as well as numerous imitations, the best of which was Ronny Yu's *The Bride with White Hair* (*Bai fa mo nu zhuan*, 1993). (Multiple sequels, cycles, and series spun off from popular films were typical of Hong Kong's high-energy cinema during this period, whose formulaic nature facilitated speedy, cost-effective production.)

Tsui turned his attention to the legendary nineteenth-century martial artist, Confucian scholar, and physician Wong Fei-hung, creating a three-part epic—*Once Upon a Time in China* (*Wong Fei-hung ji yi*, 1991, 1992, 1993)—devoted to Master Wong's heroic exploits in defending his downtrodden people from European imperialism. (The series was a smash hit domestically and made a star of Jet Li [b. 1963], the young kung fu veteran who played Wong Fei-hung.)

Another impressive group of films produced by Tsui was the martial-arts adventure series that begun with *Swordsman* (*Xiao ao jiang hu*, 1990) and continued through *East Is Red: Swordsman III* (*Dung fong bat baai 2: fung wan joi hei*, 1993). Set in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), these fantastic *wu xia* films were written and produced by Tsui but directed by others, yet the Tsui imprimatur is unmistakable. Like many of his compatriots, Tsui left Hong Kong briefly for Hollywood in the mid-1990s but returned in 2000 to direct the gangster film *Time and Tide* (*Seunlau ngaklau*), and to begin work on a sequel to his 1983 fantasy adventure *Zu: Warriors*, titled *The Legend of Zu* (*Shu shan zheng zhuan*, 2001), this time with digital, rather than optical, effects.

Two other action directors with close ties to Woo and Tsui are Ringo Lam (b. 1954) and Sammo Hung (b. 1952). Lam studied film at York University in Toronto and returned to Hong Kong to work in the industry in the early 1980s. His breakthrough film was *City on Fire* (*Long hu feng yun*, 1987), a gritty crime thriller starring Chow Yun-fat as a disaffected undercover cop who infiltrates a gang of thieves. *City on Fire* became the model for Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) and a kind of emblem for the realistic Hong Kong gangster

film in general. Lam reprised its plot through a series of similarly titled films *Prison on Fire* (*Gaam yuk fung wan*, 1987) and *School on Fire* (*Xue xiao feng yun*, 1988), arriving finally at the brutal and graphically violent *Full Contact* (*Xia dao Gao Fei*, 1992), a revenge thriller that also starred Chow Yun-fat.

Like Woo, Lam came to Hollywood to direct a martial-arts action thriller starring Jean-Claude Van Damme, but the result—Columbia/Sony's *Maximum Risk* (1996)—was considerably less happy, and Lam returned to Hong Kong in 1997. Here, he made a series of high-octane thrillers that restored his status as one of Hong Kong's greatest action directors.

Sammo Hung (b. Sammo Hung Kam-bo) was originally part of a popular comedy team with Jackie Chan and Yuen Biao. All three were childhood friends who had trained together in acrobatics at Sifu Yu Jim Yuen's famous Peking Opera School in Hong Kong. They were part of a popular group of child entertainers from the school known as the "Seven Little Fortunes," and their early life there was the subject of the 1988 Hong Kong film *Painted Faces* (*Qi qiao fu*, 1988), directed by Alex Law, in which Sammo played the role of Master Yu. Sammo Hung mainly worked in film as an actor and an occasional producer—for example, *Mr. Vampire* (*Geung si sin sang*; Ricky Lau, 1986)—until he directed a series of successful action films in genres ranging from realistic combat to slapstick kung fu to period swordplay. Sammo Hung often stars in his films and provides his own consistently inventive fight choreography.

Although Jackie Chan (b. Chan Kong Sang, 1954) is best known to Western audiences as an astonishingly inventive practitioner of physical comedy, he is also a brilliant writer, producer, and director of his own work. From his rigorous training in martial arts and acrobatics at Master Yu's Peking Opera School, he moved into cinema in his teens, and his original film persona—oddly, it now seems—was modeled on Bruce Lee. Yet it was his talent for comic martial artistry that connected with the audience in early Golden Harvest films such as *Dragon Lord* (*Long xiao ye*; Jackie Chan, 1982), and his work in nonstop action comedies such as *Wheels on Meals* (*Kwai tsan tseh*; Sammo Hung, 1984) made Chan a pan-Asian superstar. Especially notable in these films were his Keatonesque trajectory stunts, which clearly placed him in physical danger during the shoot and several times caused life-threatening injuries.

Chan did not acquire a large American following until the U.S. release of *Rumble in the Bronx* (1995), which starred him as a visiting Hong Kong cop pitted against a New York street gang. This film, like the excellent *Supercop*, was directed by Stanley Tong (b. 1960), one of Hong Kong's pre-handover Hollywood émigrés, and it was terrifically successful in its own terms, returning $32 million on its modest $7.5 million investment. After this, all of Chan's films made money in the United States, and the American-produced *Rush Hour* (1998), directed by Brett Ratner for New Line Cinema, became a genuine blockbuster, grossing $141 million against its $35 million investment. Chan finally achieved the kind of stardom in American cinema that he had enjoyed in the rest of the world for decades, giving him an international currency that few comics have enjoyed since the days of Chaplin, Keaton, and Lloyd.

One director who eschews commercialism is Stanley Kwan (b. 1957), who apprenticed as an assistant director under Ann Hui, in both television and features in the early 1980s. Similar to Hui, he has devoted much of his work to exploring the condition of women in modern China—for example, *Actress/Centre Stage* (*Ruan Ling-yu*, 1992), his biopic of Ruan Ling-yu, a hugely popular silent-film star who committed suicide at the age of twenty-five in 1935 as the result of a scandal.

Kwan's most famous New Wave film—and one that became emblematic of the aesthetic aspirations of the movement as a whole—was *Rouge* (*Yin ji kau*, 1987), an atmospheric supernatural melodrama about the ghost of a high-class call girl who has committed suicide in the 1930s and finds herself transported to a 1987 Hong Kong that is much obsessed with its past (a result of the recently announced handover, at this point ten years hence). By constructing a double storyline, Kwan was able to contrast the two Hong Kongs, point by point, and create a sense of the impenetrable barrier between past and present, at a time when the city was faced with an uncertain future. Explorations of sexual desire and gender roles have characterized Kwan's more recent work and underlined his stylistic affinity with the avant-garde lyricism of his contemporary, Wong Kar-wai.

Wong Kar-wai (b. in Shanghai, 1958) is the Hong Kong director with the highest artistic reputation and, after John Woo, the most internationally prominent. After working as a production assistant in serial television and scriptwriting for soap operas, he directed his first feature, the realistic gangster film *As Tears Go By* (*Wong gok ka moon*, 1988), apparently inspired by Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973). For *Days of Being Wild* (*A Fei jing juen*, 1991), Wong assembled a cast of stellar performers and created a film of youthful alienation and unrequited love that swept the Hong Kong Film Awards. It was *Ashes of Time* (*Dung che sai duk*, 1994), however, that announced his full maturity as an artist. Two years in production at a cost of





Maggie Cheung and Tony Leung in *In the Mood for Love* (*Fa yeung nin wa*; Wong Kar-wai, 2000).

$40 million (astronomical for a Hong Kong film), *Ashes* is an Antonioni-esque meditation on time and memory, cast in the form of a martial-arts epic.

The award-winning cinematography by Christopher Doyle (b. in Sydney, Australia, 1952), who would work with Wong consistently from *Days of Being Wild* through *In the Mood for Love* (*Fa yeung nin wa*, 2000), established a new standard in dreamlike lyricism. *Chungking Express* (*Chong qing sen lin*, 1994), which was shot during production delays on *Ashes of Time*, demonstrated that Wong's postmodern sensibility was perfectly suited to capturing the uncertain mood of Hong Kong in the years just prior to the handover. The film contains two unrelated stories of policemen and the women they love, revolving around the lonely urban lifestyles and chance encounters of its four alienated characters.

(left) Maggie Cheung in *Actress/Centre Stage* (*Ruan Ling-yu*; Stanley Kwan, 1992).

The international art-house success of *Chungking Express* led to a widespread imitation of Wong's style of free-form camera movement, step-printed slow motion, and voice-over interior monologues in other Hong Kong, Taiwanese, and mainland Chinese films, sometimes by way of parody but more often as an *hommage* to the artistic prestige Wong was bringing to a cinema generally perceived to be relentlessly and unabashedly commercial. *Fallen Angels* (*Duo luo tian shi*, 1995) continued Wong's mood-drenched romanticization of anomie in a disjointed series of episodes that follow various characters on their personal odysseys through nighttime Hong Kong.

Happy Together (*Cheun gwong tsa sit*, 1997) seemed to some critics like a change of pace, but in fact, this story of the doomed relationship of two gay lovers from Hong Kong in Buenos Aires is cut from the same cloth as its predecessors: it is about estrangement and disconnectedness as the very stuff of modern life, and Christopher Doyle's dazzling cinematography creates a level of romantic imagery that redeems the self-destructive impulses of its characters.

In the Mood for Love is probably the most widely admired film to emerge from Hong Kong cinema in a decade. Set in 1962 among the exiled Shanghaiese community in Hong Kong, it concerns two young couples living in a cramped apartment block. The husband in one couple and the wife in the other gradually come to realize that their spouses (never shown unobscured in the film) are having an affair, and in the slow process of coming to terms with this knowledge, they fall in love. The film manages to be intensely erotic and sensual, even though the principals rarely touch, thanks in large part to Doyle's multiple-award-winning cinematography, which evokes a vanished time and place with rare beauty. (Mark Li Ping-bin, Hou Hsiao-hsien's regular director of photography, also worked on the film.) Most of *In the Mood for Love* was shot in Bangkok to re-create the look and feel of 1960s Hong Kong, with one or two Hong Kong locations (which had already been built over by the time of the film's release, so quickly does the city reinvent itself). Working, as always, from a story idea without a finished script, Wong infused *In the Mood for Love* with a combination of nostalgia and postmodern hipness that has become his stock in trade. In a way, his project all along has been to create a memory for a city that wants to deny it has one—a "city on fire" that, like its cinema, has become a kind of self-consuming artifact.

Taiwan (Republic of China)

From 1947 through 1987, the island nation of Taiwan—which mainland China threatens militarily and still claims as its own—was ruled by Chiang Kai-shek's authoritarian Kuomintang (KMT) government under martial law, and all media were subject to political censorship. For this reason, its film industry developed slowly and was long dominated by that of Hong Kong, although with 21.9 million people Taiwan has nearly four times Hong Kong's population. During the 1960s, the government-owned Central Motion Picture Corporation (CMPC) attempted to boost feature production through a system of direct funding and loans.

This maneuver helped Li Han-hsiang (1926–1996), a director of costume films at Shaw Brothers, found the Grand Motion Picture Company in Taipei in 1963. Here, films such as *The Love Eterne* (*Liang Shan bo yu Zhu Ying tai*, 1963) and *Four Moods* (*Hsi nou ai lueh*, 1970) were made, which helped lay the groundwork for an indigenous Taiwanese feature cinema. Another Shaw Brothers transplant, Hu Chin-chuan (1931–1997), founded the International Motion Picture Studio in Taipei at about the same time and introduced swordplay (*wu xia*) films to Taiwan—for example, his own *Dragon Inn* (*Lung men ke zhan*, 1967).

Such local filmmakers as there were tended to focus mainly on the problems of rural communities, but as the island rapidly industrialized and its people became more affluent during the 1970s, wave after wave of locally produced martial-arts films (mainly, Mandarin-dialect) and slick youth-oriented melodramas (mostly, Taiwanese-dialect) appeared in a market formerly given over to Shaw Brothers' productions. For example, 327 films, more than half of the 609 features produced in Taiwan between 1972 and 1974, were of the swordplay or kung fu genre.

In the early 1980s, however, a new generation of filmmakers, most of whom had studied abroad and had a clearer sense of their cultural identity, entered the industry. Assisted by the CMPC (which by this time controlled theaters, as well as production finance) and by a liberalization of government censorship that came with the end of martial law in 1987, they created a distinctive "New Cinema," or "New Wave" (*hsin-jui*), in low- to medium-budget films that dealt with day-to-day reality in Taiwan but were often stylistically experimental.

The leading figures of New Taiwan Cinema were Edward Yang (Yang De-chang, 1947–2007) and Hou Hsiao-hsien (b. 1947). Yang's first feature, *That Day on the Beach* (*Hai tan de yi tian*, 1983), showed the



Cora Miao as Zhou Yufang in *The Terrorizers* (*Kong bu fen zi*; Edward Yang, 1986).



Wou Yi-Fang and Xin Shu-Fen in *City of Sadness* (*Bei qing cheng shi*; Hou Hsiao-hsien, 1989).

influence of European modernism, especially the work of Antonioni, in its depiction of contemporary urban alienation. Similarly, in *Taipei Story* (*Qing mei zhu ma*, 1985), a materially successful husband and wife unexpectedly find their relationship falling apart in the rapidly changing capital city, while *The Terrorizers* (*Kong bu fen zi*, 1986) is about an estranged office worker who murders his wife and her lover in a fit of anomie.

In the early 1990s, Yang directed the four-hour *A Brighter Summer Day* (*Guling jie shaonian sha ren shijian*, 1991), generally considered to be his masterpiece. This sprawling film offers a precision-honed reconstruction of an actual Taipei street murder, at the same time that it provides a detailed account of its dislocated 1960s social context. With the comic action thriller *Mahjong* (*Majiang*, 1996), Yang briefly took a more commercial turn, but *Yi yi* (also known as *A One and a Two . . .* , 2000), with its episodic narrative of a middle-class family thrown into crisis through a series of random incidents, exhibits both the novelistic sweep and the metaphoric exploration of Taiwanese cultural identity that characterized his greatest work, and it deservedly won the 2000 Palme d'Or at Cannes for Best Direction.

The work of Hou Hsiao-hsien is more traditional and nostalgic, reaching back to a preindustrial Chinese culture and family life. Nearly all of his films to date are about the disorienting, often disintegrating impact of city life on people newly arrived from rural towns. Some take the form of family chronicles—*A Time to Live and a Time to Die* (*Tong nien wang shi*, 1985) depicts three generations of Chinese villagers as they adapt and survive migration to modernizing Taiwan, while Hou's magnum opus, *City of Sadness* (*Bei qing cheng shi*, 1989), focuses on the fate of a Taiwanese family during the island's transfer from Japanese to Chinese hands, from 1945 to 1949, and the setting up of Chiang Kai-shek's repressive Kuomintang government. *City of Sadness* won the Golden Lion at Venice and came to form the first part of a loose trilogy on the history of postwar Taiwan.

The second installment, *The Puppetmaster* (*Xi meng ren sheng*, 1993), was shot on location in the mainland province of Fujan. This biography of veteran



Zhang Ziyi in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Ang Lee, 2000).

puppeteer Li T'ien-lu takes place between 1908 and 1945, when the province was under Japanese rule, and it collapses narrative and documentary form by having the real Li narrating and commenting on the dramatization of events from his life. *Good Men, Good Women* (*Hao nan hao nu*, 1995), the trilogy's final entry, deals with Taiwan during the early 1950s, when Chiang Kai-shek launched an anti-Communist terror campaign against his own people. Throughout the trilogy, as in all of his work, Hou uses long takes, offscreen space, and Ozu-like "empty scenes" to create a meditative quality that resonates with his evocation of history, but *Good Men, Good Women* signaled a new attention to moving camera shots that was brought to fruition in *Flowers of Shanghai* (*Hai shang hua*, 1998), a co-production with Japan's Shochiku studio. This uncharacteristic period drama, set in the brothels of nineteenth-century Shanghai, was filmed with a continuously moving camera by Hou's frequent collaborator Mark Li Ping-bin, with sequence shots linked together by slow fades to black. Because of the intellectual difficulty and challenging artistic complexity of his work, Hou Hsiao-hsien has never been a popular filmmaker, either at home or abroad. Yet among international critics, he is regarded as one of the world's greatest living directors for his mastery of style and for his principled critique of modernity, on both an existential and a cultural level.

In the late 1980s, the Taiwanese Government Information Office (GIO) set up a system to encourage local production by giving cash awards for scripts. The chief beneficiaries of this Guidance Fund for Domestically Produced Films, known as the *fudao jin* (subsidy) system, were members of the so-called second wave of the New Taiwan Cinema, led by Ang Lee and Tsai Ming-liang. Ang Lee (b. in Taiwan, 1954), who studied film at New York University, made his feature debut with the intergenerational comedy *Pushing Hands* (*Tui shou*, 1992), which was about cultural conflict in a Taiwanese family living in New York. Much of Ang Lee's subsequent work would deal with similar themes—for example, his breakthrough film *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), a romantic comedy, in which a gay Taiwanese immigrant in New York stages a heterosexual wedding for the benefit of his traditionally conservative parents, who insist on coming from China to attend the ceremony; and *Eat Drink Man Woman* (*Yinshi nan nu*, 1994), another look at an intrafamilial generation gap, shot on location in Taiwan and revolving around the psychological and social meanings of food in a traditional culture.

Even Ang's most thoroughly Westernized films—his Jane Austin adaptation *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), his version of Rick Moody's novel of suburban anomie *The Ice Storm* (1997), his generic Western *Ride with the Devil* (1999), his Marvel superhero epic *Hulk*

(2003), and his unconventional, homoerotic Western *Brokeback Mountain* (2005)—are all about societies and/or social groups whose future is as uncertain and tenuous as that of Taiwan, because they have lived through periods of rapid social change.

Moreover, Ang Lee was clearly reclaiming his Chinese heritage in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), a wonderfully realized "magical action" or "flying swordsman" adventure epic of the sort that Hong Kong directors had been turning out for decades, and it had the additional cachet of fight choreography by Yuen Woo-ping, who had performed the same service for the Wachowski siblings' popular *The Matrix* (another film highly derivative of Hong Kong action genres) a year earlier. *Crouching Tiger* caused a sensation in the West; it was nominated for fourteen Academy Awards and received four. Yet *Crouching Tiger* bombed in all three Chinese markets because audiences there had seen it all before—and many felt, had seen it better.

Lee turned to China again with *Lust, Caution* (2007), an espionage thriller set in Japanese-occupied Shanghai during World War II, and he has twice won Academy Awards for Best Director, first for *Brokeback Mountain* and, more recently, for *Life of Pi* (2012; 3-D).

In 1999, under pressure from the United States, Taiwan lifted the import quotas that had protected its domestic industry for decades, and in the following year, production dropped to just sixteen features, which on release shared among themselves less than 1 percent of annual box-office revenues. In 2008, however, Wei Te-Sheng's romantic musical comedy *Cape No. 7* became the highest-grossing local film of all time, second only to *Titanic* (1997). The film's success helped the Taiwanese industy recover from a decade-long depression, but it remains in a downturn. This makes the GIO subsidies, which have a ceiling of US$330,000 per title, crucial to the continued existence of Taiwanese cinema, and indeed, more than half of all domestic films receive some government funding. Because the minimum feature budget is approximately $530,000, however, filmmakers can usually start production without considering the local market at all, which explains how a national cinema with only one functioning studio (the CMPC, which also owns theaters) and massive competition from abroad can sustain an artist such as Tsai Ming-liang (b. in Malaysia, 1957).

Produced by the GIO and the CMPC, Tsai's austere study of nihilistic Taipei youths in *Rebels of the Neon God* (*Qing shao nien nuo zha*, 1992) reminded critics of Antonioni in its disposition of real time, and it won multiple international awards. Composed of very long takes, virtually without dialogue, *Vive l'amour* (*Ai qing wan sui*, 1994) revolves around anonymous couplings in a vacant Taipei apartment; it evoked comparisons with the work of Bresson and Ozu, and it won the Golden Lion at Venice. The last film in what became a vague trilogy on the soullessness of modern Taipei, *The River* (*He liu*, 1997) extends the stories of some of the characters from *Rebels of the Neon God* as they have formed dysfunctional families.

Tsai's more recent films reveal a turn toward the absurdist avant-garde. *The Hole* (*Dong*, 1998), for example, is a grim tale of urban bleakness in the near future whose alienated characters express their feelings in lip-synched production numbers from 1950s Hong Kong musicals, whereas *What Time Is It There?* (*Ni neibian jidian*, 2001) concerns several characters who become obsessed with the idea that the differential between time zones conceals a hidden dimension.

The absurdist note in Tsai's work can be thought to resonate with the situation of Taiwan itself, whose national and cultural identity has been called constantly into question for the last hundred years. Brutally occupied by the Japanese from 1895 to 1945; ruled by the repressive Kuomintang from 1947 to 1988; and treated as a nation-state and heavily armed by the United States (which is its largest trading partner, followed by Japan) during the Cold War but regarded by much of the world (including the United Nations and, officially at least, the United States) as belonging to mainland China, which stands ready to go to war if its claim on the island is materially disputed, Taiwan is a country whose geopolitical existence is tinged with absurdity. Add to this the social dislocations produced by the rapid industrialization and urbanization of a centuries-old agrarian economy (metropolitan Taipei contains 7.7 million people, more than one-third of the country's population), and Taiwan's cinema of postmodern absurdity begins to make a lot of sense.



Agheleh Rezaie in *At Five in the Afternoon* (*Panj e asr*; Samira Makhmalbaf, 2003).



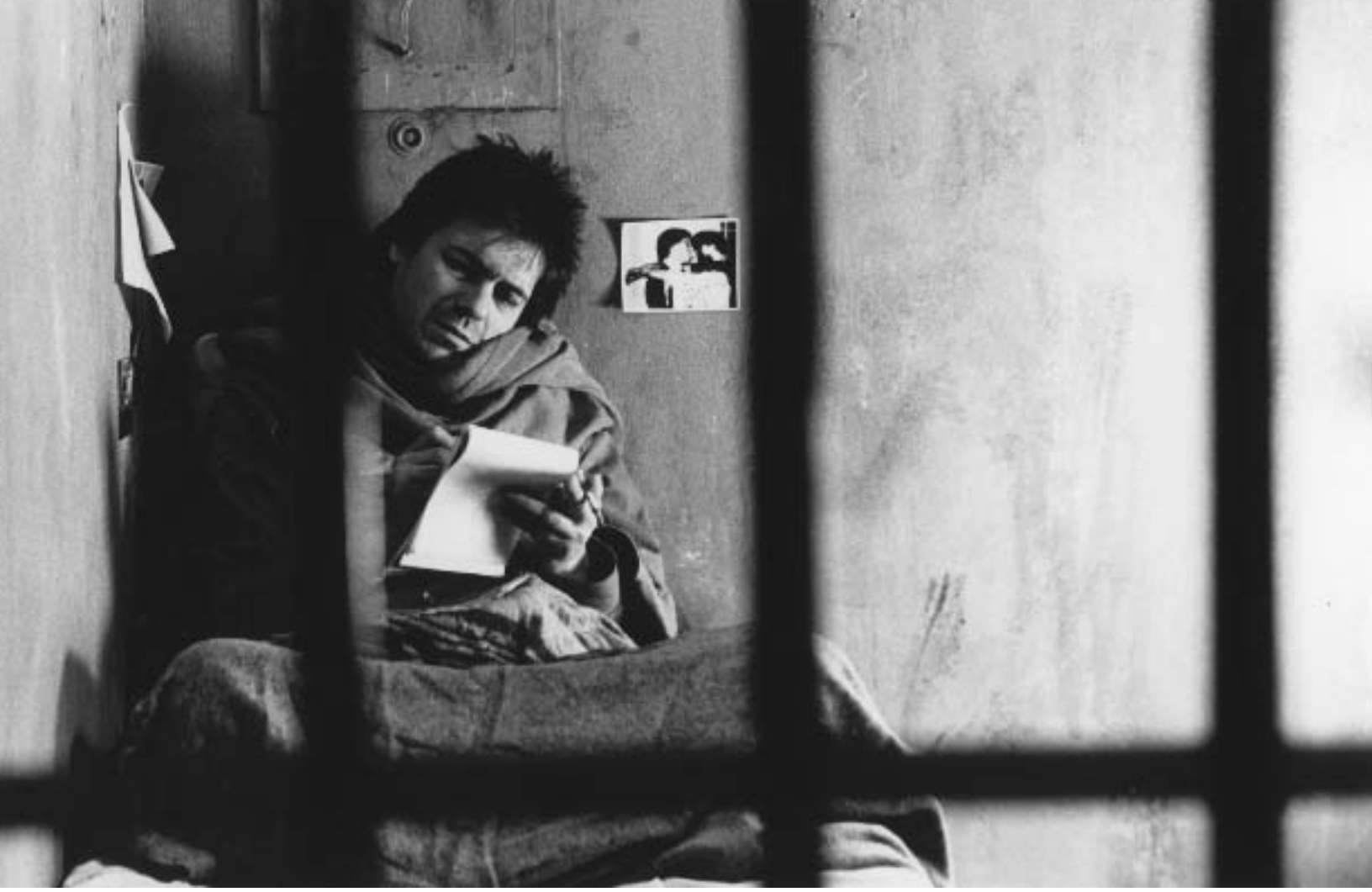
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Third World Cinema

Vital national film cultures have gradually developed in the nations of Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and the Pacific Rim, collectively known as the Third World, in the last fifty years. By the mid-1970s, Third World cinema was widely recognized as one of the most important and innovative movements in contemporary filmmaking, as significant historically as were Italian neorealism and the French New Wave. The term *Third World* covers a wide range of films produced on three continents, in countries most of which have long histories of exploitation and colonial oppression by Western powers.

Only now are these countries emerging from centuries of underdevelopment, and their struggle to do so has produced one of the most exciting creative impulses in cinema today. (The concept of a "Third World" is a post–World War II phenomenon, in which the "developing nations"—most of them former colonies of various European countries—were counterposed to the "free world" of the Western democracies, dominated by the United States, and to the "socialist world" of the Communist countries, dominated by the Soviet Union; since the Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the term has come to be used more as a geographical designation than a geopolitical one.)

Despite the ethnic and political diversity of Third World countries, their cinemas tend to have several common characteristics that identify them as parts of a coherent international movement. First, Third World filmmakers conceive of cinema not as an entertainment commodity



Miguel Ángel Solá in *Sur* (*The South*; Fernando Solanas, 1988).

produced to make a profit, but as a compelling means of mass persuasion, cultural consolidation, and consciousness raising. Second, Third World filmmakers often, but not always, operate from an independent production base outside of their countries' established (and usually Western-dominated) film industries.

For this reason, Third World cinema is distinguished by its use of unconventional production modes, including collective production, secret or "underground" production, on-location shooting of guerrilla warfare, and non-Western extra-national funding. Finally—and most important, from an aesthetic standpoint—Third World cinema rejects the conventional narrative syntax of Hollywood and other Western film industries in an effort to extend the limits of film structure and provide audiences with new ways of seeing their sociopolitical reality. The ultimate goal of this process is the reclamation of authentic forms of national cultural expression long obscured by imposed foreign values.

As the militant Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino put it, theirs is a "third cinema" that goes beyond conventional Hollywood narrative ("first cinema") or the auteurist cinema of personal expression ("second cinema"). The practitioners of this third cinema mean to counter

> a cinema of characters with a cinema of themes, one of individuals with one of the masses, one of auteurs with one of operative groups, a cinema of neocolonial misinformation with a cinema of information, one of escape with one that recaptures the truth, a cinema of passivity with one of aggression. To an institutionalized cinema, it counterposes a guerrilla cinema; to movies as shows or spectacles, it counterposes a film act or action; to a cinema of destruction, it counterposes one that is both destructive and constructive; to a cinema made for and by the old kind of human beings, it counterposes a cinema *fit for a new kind of human being, for what each one of us has the possibility of becoming.* [original emphasis]

Latin America

Historically, the Latin American film industries have been dominated by large U.S.-based producer-distributors. In 1984, for example, American corporations controlled the largest shares of the film markets in all Latin American countries except Cuba, whose market is closed, and Brazil, which for the first time in history achieved a 50 percent share of its own market through the successful creation of a state-controlled monopoly. Typically, a Latin American country will harbor a strong and tightly knit group of American-based distribution companies that markets major American and European productions in uneven competition with a handful of local distributors that market local productions and some minor European and American product.

The Americans are organized as branches of the U.S. Motion Picture Export Association (MPEA), and in general they function to oppose all forms of state protectionism for the local industries, including placing ceilings on the price of theater tickets and any measures that would restrict the outward flow of foreign (i.e., American) currency. Furthermore, as Jorge Schnitman points out, the United States has always had the largest domestic film market in the capitalist world, a market where investments in production can be completely amortized before a film is sent abroad. This has meant that American films in foreign markets had only to recover local distribution costs before realizing a profit, while local films had to recover both production and distribution costs in the same market, with little hope of export.

Film as an entertainment commodity appeared in Latin America shortly after the first commercial projection by the Lumières in Paris in December 1895. There were projections in Brazil in July 1896 and in Argentina in September, and even though film appeared much later in some of the smaller countries (in Bolivia, e.g., in 1909), exhibition facilities in general developed rapidly throughout Latin America—at first, as in the United States, mainly for working-class audiences. Latin American markets existed initially for both European and American films, but during World War I, the region was forced to rely exclusively on American products, and by 1916, American silent features dominated Latin American screens.

At the same time (and about a decade after the United States), the Latin American distribution system changed from one of outright sale of prints to exhibitors to the leasing of prints to them for a percentage of the gross receipts, which favored the policy of American companies to establish their own local distributorships. By the early 1920s, the Latin American audience had expanded to include the middle and upper-middle classes, and U.S. companies dominated distribution to the virtual exclusion of local and European competitors. American dominion remained unchanged even after the coming of sound, which in other parts of the world generally increased the muscle of local industries by creating a language barrier against the Hollywood product.

Simply put, dependency on America had rendered the Latin American industries incapable of supplying their own markets—collectively estimated in 1920 to include 100 million people—even after the advent of sound created a demand for Spanish-language films. So Hollywood happily filled the gap by converting its studios to the production of features in Spanish and Portuguese, and later, by dubbing its own productions into the local languages. By 1935, for example, more than 76 percent of the 504 feature films distributed in Argentina were brokered by American companies; and in Mexico, three years later, 80 percent of all films in release were American-made.

The outbreak of war in Europe intensified the situation, because it drastically decreased Hollywood's foreign-film revenues. As explained in Chapter 11, Germany and the countries it occupied banned American films outright; other countries, such as Britain and Australia, needed foreign exchange so badly that they imposed rigorous currency restrictions of their own. In fact, Continental Europe, where the American majors had done more than 25 percent of their international business in 1936, had practically vanished as a market by 1940, when the only business conducted there by American film companies was with neutral Switzerland and Sweden.

By 1941, only Central and South America remained major importers of American films, persuading Hollywood to recolonize its neighbors with a vengeance. The State Department aided the cause by creating the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA) in October 1940, whose objective was to promote the Good Neighbor Policy and combat pro-Axis sentiment in Latin America. The CIAA's Motion Picture Division was put under the directorship of John Hay Whitney, whose first goal was to eliminate unflattering Latin American stereotypes and misinformation from Hollywood features and to encourage the



Carlos Gardel and Rosita Moreno in *Tango Bar* (John Reinhardt, 1935), an Argentine film produced outside of Argentina.

production of films employing authentic Latin stars. In short order, the war years would witness reverential biographies of nineteenth-century Mexican president Benito Juárez and continental liberator Simón Bolívar, as well as films with contemporary settings that differentiated, for the first time in American films, among various Latin American locales. Finally, planeloads of Latin talent were imported into Hollywood during this era, acquainting American audiences with such performers as Lupe Velez, Carmen Miranda, Desi Arnaz, and Cesar Romero, to name but a few.

Whitney's second initiative was more overtly political and involved the neutralization of propaganda flowing into Argentina, Brazil, and Chile from Axis wire services, features, and documentaries. To this end, he created the Newsreel Section, and by 1943, the CIAA had shipped more than 200 pro-American newsreels for free distribution in Latin American theaters. By the war's end, the United States' conquest of the Latin American film markets was as total as its geopolitical victory over the Axis. And, as Jorge Schnitman observes,

> [a]lthough the U.S. film industry underwent remarkable transformations during the 1930–1980 period, for all practical purposes the problem of its overwhelming presence in Latin America remained throughout that period [with the obvious exception of Cuba after 1959], and only decreased somewhat whenever Latin American governments implemented consistent protectionist policies or when specific markets lost their appeal due to unfavorable exchange rates and similar problems.

Only three countries followed the protectionist path with any consistency—Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil—and of these, only Mexico and Brazil have achieved even semiautonomy in their own markets.

Mexico

The less successful of the two has been Mexico, which attempted to model its industry on that of the United States and which, at its extraordinary best, could produce films such as Buñuel's *Los olvidados* (1950; Best Director, Cannes, 1951). At its worst, it churned out hundreds of low-budget quickies—known locally as *churros*, a popular fried-dough confection of little nutritional value—the staple product of the 1960s and beyond. The Mexican cinema's "golden age" occurred during the 1940s, which began with the establishment in 1942 of the Banco Cinematográfico, a credit-granting agency for producers backed by the central government.

By 1945, Mexico was producing a record eighty to ninety films a year, compared to Argentina's and Spain's fifty to sixty, and an oligarchic, star-based studio system was being consolidated along American lines. It was during this decade that the collaboration of the director Emilio "El Indio" Fernández (1904–1986) and cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa (1907–1997)—for example, *María Candelaria* (1943; Grand Prix, Cannes, 1946)—became world-famous, as did the work of the brilliant comic actor Cantinflas (known as Mario Moreno; 1911–1993). This period also saw the urban *cine negro* films (film noirs) of Julio Bracho (1909–1978) and Roberto Govaldon (1909–1986). During the 1950s and the early 1960s, locally popular genres were the ranch comedy (*comedia ranchera*) and the cabaret melodrama, while international attention was claimed by the Mexican films of Buñuel and, to a lesser degree, those of his Spanish-born scriptwriter Luis Alcoriza. By the early 1960s, however, the golden age was over. Production fell from an all-time high of 136 features in 1958 to a record low of 71 in 1961, and a wave of cheaply produced *churros* overwhelmed the industry.

In 1963, however, the country's first film school, Centro Universitario de Estudios Cinematográficos (CUEC), was established in Mexico City, and by the late 1960s, it was graduating young directors who turned for the first time to independent production in films that openly challenged the repressive regime of President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. This generation



Pedro Armendáriz and Dolores Del Rio in *María Candelaria* (Emilio Fernández, 1943).



Lumi Cavazos in *Como agua para chocolate* (*Like Water for Chocolate*; Alfonso Arau, 1992), a film about sexual attraction and the magical power of cooking; shot by the brilliant Mexican cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki.

included the Chilean-born Alejandro Jodorowsky, Jorge Fons, Felipe Cazals, Marcela Fernández Violante, Arturo Ripstein, Ariel Zúñiga, and Jaime Humberto Hermosillo, as well as Paul Leduc and Sergio Olhovich, both trained abroad. From 1970 to 1976, the new filmmakers benefited from the pro-left policies of President Luis Echeverría Álvarez, who encouraged them to make films of social criticism and revolutionary zeal that would at the same time upgrade the quality of Mexican cinema. To this end, Echeverría virtually nationalized the film industry and placed the administration of the Banco Cinematográfico in the hands of his brother Rodolfo. As a result, the 1970s witnessed an extraordinary flourishing of Mexican film. Yet this renaissance did not survive the administration of President José López Portillo, 1976–1982, who put his sister Margarita in charge of the film industry.

In a disastrous attempt to return production to the private sector, she dissolved the Banco Cinematográfico and drove many of the independent artists fostered by Echeverría out of filmmaking altogether. At the same time, a fire in 1982 totally destroyed the Cineteca Nacional, Mexico's national film archive and the most important cinematheque in Latin America. In addition, Mexico (population 121.8 million) began to experience one of the worst financial crises in its history. The establishment of the Mexican Film Institute (IMCINE) by the administration of President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado in 1983 could do little to aid the film industry financially (although IMCINE ultimately became the home of a second national film school), and it returned to the production of privately financed *churro*-like genre films—chiefly, soft-core bordello comedies, gritty urban-crime films, and borderline thrillers—at the rate of about seventy-five features per year.

The election of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari caused a brief production boom in 1988, as annual output reached 112 features—the highest volume since the 1950s—most shot in four weeks with an average budget of $200,000 per film. Yet the government's subsequent withdrawal of state support for production, combined with the steady shrinking of both domestic and international markets for Mexican features, caused an industry crisis in the 1990s, when annual production plummeted below the levels of the 1930s (thirty-four features in 1991, forty-one in 1992, etc.)—a situation not remedied by the government of President Ernesto Zedillo, elected in 1994. Ironically, the need to secure outside financing has brought to fruition a number of critically acclaimed independent projects by industry



Diego Luna, Ana López Mercado, and Gael García Bernal in *Y tu mamá también* (*And Your Mother Too*; Alfonso Cuarón, 2001), a sexually explicit road-trip movie; also shot by Emmanuel Lubezki.

veterans and such relative newcomers as Alfonso Arau, whose *Como agua para chocolate* (*Like Water for Chocolate*, 1992) became an art-house hit in the United States, and two new women directors, Dana Rotberg (*Ángel de fuego* [*Angel of Fire*, 1992]) and María Novaro (*Danzón*, 1992).

Yet for the entire decade of the 1990s, the annual output was only eight or nine films, of which IMCINE produced about half, leaving the lion's share of the domestic market to imports. This problem continued into the 2010s, when as much as an 88 percent share of ticket sales went to Hollywood product, and IMCINE funding was significantly reduced. Increasingly, Mexican films are shot on DV (digital video) and transferred to 35mm—for example, Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Amores perros* (*Love's a Bitch*, 2000) and *Biutiful* (2010).

Two Mexican directors have established international reputations for their work both inside and outside of the domestic industry. Guillermo del Toro (b. 1964) began by directing horror films—for example, the Mexican vampire film *Cronos* (1993) and the Hollywood mutant-bug movie *Mimic* (1997)—then produced in Spain *The Devil's Backbone* (*El espinazo del Diablo*, 2001), a sophisticated ghost story with a political subtext. His *Pan's Labyrinth* (*El laberinto del fauno*, 2006) won critical adulation worldwide, as did his science-fiction monster film *Pacific Rim* (2013), a version of Japanese *kaiju*. Alfonso Cuarón (b. 1961) made his first domestic feature with the sexually graphic coming-of-age film *Y tu mamá también* (*And Your Mother Too,* 2001), whose hemispheric success won Cuarón a contract to direct the third Harry Potter film, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2003). After the dystopian science-fiction film *The Children of Men* (2006), Cuarón directed the extraordinary, award-winning 3-D space odyssey *Gravity* (2013).

Brazil

Brazil has been more successful than Mexico in developing its own film industry. The country (population approximately 201 million) initially adopted a Hollywood-style studio system but finally rejected it in favor of independent production. Despite an early attempt from 1908 to 1911 to organize a vertically integrated monopoly of national entrepreneurs, by 1924 the preponderance of films in the Brazilian market were from Hollywood, paralleling the situation in the rest of Latin America. Of 1,422 films presented for censorship

that year, 1,268, or 86 percent, came from the United States. Yet in 1932, President Getúlio Vargas established the precedent of screen quotas for local film production. From that time until Vargas's death by suicide in 1954, the model of state-directed, capitalist development of the national industry prevailed, although it hardly provided a serious threat to American hegemony. The most successful national genre during this period was a hybrid of musical revue and popular comedy called the *chanchada* (loosely translated as "cultural trash"), featuring comic performers from the radio and the Brazilian equivalent of cabaret. After Vargas's death, there was a decade of indecision, during which continuing economic crises and a succession of weak governments raised the promise of radical social change, and it was in this context that Brazilian ***cinema novo*** ("new cinema") was born.

Cinema novo sought new approaches to the realities of underdevelopment, poverty, and exploitation that had gone unacknowledged in Brazilian films to date. Drawing on new links with the working class and a new focus on native folklore and tradition, *cinema novo* filmmakers modeled their practice on the improvisatory techniques of the Italian neorealists (e.g., the use of nonactors and location shooting) and the production strategies of the French New Wave (i.e., creative financing and low-budget, sometimes collective, production). As part of their Marxist ideology, these directors decried the colonization of Brazilian cinema by Hollywood and subverted classical narrative codes in their own work wherever possible. The clear leader of the movement was Glauber Rocha (1938–1981), whose films and theoretical writings laid the foundation for a new Latin American cinema—one that would acknowledge the political and social realities of a country half of whose people were unemployed and illiterate. Appropriately, Rocha's most important work corresponds to each of the three recognized stages of *cinema novo*.

The films of the first phase, 1960–1964, drew on the history of proletarian revolt and were distinguished by radical optimism; to this period belong Rocha's *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol* (*Black God, White Devil*, 1964) and Nelson Pereira dos Santos's (b. 1928) *Vidas secas* (*Barren Lives*, 1963); these works focused in various ways on peasant life in the *sertao*, Brazil's drought-ridden, impoverished northeastern plain. Also belonging to this first phase was Carlos Diegues's (b. 1940) *Ganga Zumba* (1963), a historical account of a successful slave revolt on a seventeenth-century surgarcane plantation. These films and their counterparts were extraordinarily successful on the international festival circuit, five of them winning major awards in 1962, when they represented 20 percent of the Brazilian industry's total output.

The second stage, 1964–1968, marked a period of reassessment, and ultimately, disillusionment, as the





Fernando Ramos da Silva and Marília Pêra in *Pixote* (Hector Babenco, 1981).

civilian government was overthrown by a military coup and the forms of democracy all but disappeared. This was the time of Paulo Cesar Saraceni's *O desafio* (*The Challenge*, 1966) and Rocha's *Terra en transe* (*Land in Anguish*, 1967), whose protagonists are urban intellectuals consumed with self-doubt. In the movement's final and in many ways its richest phase, 1968–1972, corresponding to the imposition of a repressive military dictatorship by the Fifth Institutional Act, *cinema novo* filmmakers turned heavily to symbolism to circumvent military censorship. This stage came to be known as the "cannibal-tropicalist" phase, because so many of its films were cast in the form of mythological allegories of cannibalism.

Despite their repressiveness, however, the military regimes of the 1960s did attempt to support the expansion of Brazilian film production, creating the National Film Institute in 1966 and the state film trust Embrafilme in 1969. Strict sexual censorship was partially rescinded in the early 1970s, although ideological censorship prevailed until the restoration of democracy in 1985. The immediate result was a wave of *pornochanchadas*, soft-core erotic comedies popular mainly with local audiences, but the eventual result of Embrafilme's mandate was the state-led vertical integration of the Brazilian industry. Distinguished *cinema novo* directors such as Carlos Diegues and Nelson Pereira dos Santos returned at the virtual invitation of the government to enter mainstream production.

During the next fifteen years, the Brazilian industry produced at least a dozen international hits, most of them based on indigenous folklore, history, or literature, including Diegues's *Xica da Silva* (1976), Brazil's first worldwide box-office success, and *Bye Bye Brazil* (1980); Bruno Barreto's (b. 1955) *Dona Flor e seus dois maridos* (*Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands*, 1976); Pereira dos Santos's *Tenda dos milagres* (*Tent of Miracles*, 1977); Argentine-born Hector Babenco's (b. 1946) *Pixote* (1981; winner of the New York Film Critics Circle Award for

(left) *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol* (*Black God, White Devil*; Glauber Rocha, 1964).

Best Foreign Film) and *O beijo da mulher aranha* (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*, 1985); and Ruy Guerra's *Eréndira* (1983), based on the work of Gabriel García Márquez.

By 1985, the country elected its first civilian president since 1964, Embrafilme had captured not only foreign attention for Brazilian cinema but also an unprecedented 50 percent share of its own market. From producing only twelve films in 1963, Brazil had become the sixth-largest film producer in the world, with an average output of 100 features per year since 1983. It seemed to be a triumph of capitalist initiative, combined with state protectionism and politically committed talent. Unfortunately, the new government of José Sarney inherited from its predecessors an annual inflation rate of 800 percent and a staggering burden of foreign debt. As a result, Embrafilme production in the late 1980s fell off by 30 to 40 percent, and rigorous new protectionist legislation was enacted.

A wave of domestically produced pornographic films, both soft- and hard-core, came to dominate the industry, although many films of international caliber continued to be made. In 1990, however, the Sarney government withdrew all funds from Embrafilme, and Hector Babenco declared at Cannes that Brazilian cinema was dead. During the next few years, Brazil experienced a rapid spiral of deflation, and the film industry ground to a near standstill, with only six features completed in 1992.

In subsequent years, the government was successful in stimulating domestic production with tax breaks for companies investing in films, but—with a handful of exceptions, such as Walter Salles Jr.'s (b. 1956) internationally hailed *Central Station* (*Central do Brasil*, 1998)—Brazilian films did not play well in the local theatrical market, which, not incidentally, is the ninth-largest in the world. In 1999, however, the Brazilian media conglomerate Globo created Globofilmes, many of whose productions have been based on popular television shows, but which has also invested in art films such as Carlos Diegues's *Orfeu* (1999), a retelling of the Orpheus and Euridice myth, based on the same play (Vinícius de Moraes's *Orfeu da Conceicaol*) that inspired Marcel Camus's 1959 *Black Orpheus*. Since Globofilmes entered the picture, the Brazilian industry has averaged about thirty-five films a year.

Argentina

Argentine cinema existed under various forms of state protectionism, together with a rigorous system of pre- and postproduction censorship, from the coming of sound until 1984. After the fall of the Perónist government in 1955, controls were relaxed and the studio system collapsed, but after 1957, new restrictions on imports were imposed, and domestic production was resumed on a film-by-film basis. It was at this time that the Argentine director Leopoldo Torre Nilsson (1924–1978) emerged as an international figure. The son of a Swedish mother and the Argentine director Leopoldo Torres Ríos (1899–1960), Torre Nilsson's first independent production was an adaptation of a short story by Jorge Luis Borges, *Días de odio*, in 1954. The four films that brought him to the attention of European critics—*La casa del ángel* (*The House of the Angel*, 1957), *La caída* (*The Fall*, 1959), *La mano en la trampa* (*The Hand in the Trap*, 1961), and *Sententa veces siete* (*Seventy Times Seven*, 1962; also known as *The Female*)—were all adapted, from her own writings, by his wife and frequent collaborator, Beatriz Guido (1924–1988).

Like Buñuel, with whom he is often compared, Torre Nilsson deals with the hypocrisy and repressiveness of the bourgeoisie. A near contemporary of Torre Nilsson is Fernando Birri (b. 1925), founder of the Documentary Film School of Santa Fe (La Escuela Documental de Santa Fe) at Argentina's National University of the Littoral in 1956 and a pioneer of what was to become the New Latin American Cinema movement. Birri, who studied at Rome's Centro Sperimentale, produced with his own students one of Latin America's first social documentaries in *Tire dié* (*Throw a Dime*, 1958), a short about the degrading poverty of Buenos Aires's slums, as well as the neorealistic feature *Los inundados* (*Flood Victims/Flooded Out*, 1962), a prizewinner at Venice in 1962. Living in exile since 1964, Birri has helped materially develop the cinemas of Cuba, Mexico, and Venezuela, and in 1986, he was named director of the newly established School of Film and Television (La Escuela de Cine y Televisión) in the suburbs of Havana.

In the early 1960s, there was some interesting activity among a group of young filmmakers who called themselves the "1960 generation" and practiced a European-style new cinema (*nuevo cine*). Most notable among them were Fernando Ayala (1920–1997), *El jefe* (*The Boss*, 1958); Lautaro Murúa (1927–1995), *Alias Gardelito* (also known as *Little Gardel*, 1961); Manuel Antin (b. 1926), *La cifra impar* (*The Odd Number*, 1961; adapted by Julio Cortázar from his own story); and Leonardo Favio (b. 1938), *Crónica de un niño solo* (*Chronicle of a Boy Alone*, 1965). The influence of Brazilian *cinema novo* revealed itself in the birth of the Cine Liberación group in the late 1960s in response to both the doldrums of the Argentine



Elsa Daniel in *La casa del ángel* (*The House of the Angel*; Leopoldo Torre Nilsson, 1957).

commercial industry and the social upheavals of the era. Cine Liberación's most famous production was the three-part agitprop documentary *La hora de los hornos* (*The Hour of the Furnaces*, 1968), directed by the group's founders, Fernando Solanas (b. 1936) and Octavio Getino (b. 1935). This film combines newsreel and documentary footage with dramatic reenactments and printed slogans in a rapid-fire montage that is distinctly revolutionary (and nonrational) in its appeal. It is a classic example of "third cinema," in that its primary value is neither as entertainment nor as art, but rather as an agent of ideological praxis. Other films associated with Cine Liberación were Hugo Santiago's (b. 1939) *Invasión* (1968) and Héctor Olivera's *La Patagonia rebelde* (*Rebellion in Patagonia*, 1974), which won the Silver Bear Award in Berlin.

In 1973, Juan Perón returned to Argentina from exile in Spain and was elected president; when he died a year later, his wife, Isabel, replaced him until she was removed by a military coup in 1976. The country then was plunged into an economic and political crisis of major proportion; inflation reached 100 percent, and the film industry was virtually paralyzed. By 1982, domestic production had fallen to an all-time low of eighteen films per year, and under pressure from filmmakers, the military government empowered the National Film Institute (INC, founded 1955) to make production loan guarantees and named director Manuel Antin as its head. Then came the disastrous Malvinas/Falkland Islands war with Britain in 1982, the collapse of the Argentine dictatorship, and the restoration of democracy under President Raúl Alfonsín. Censorship was eliminated, and exiled filmmakers returned from abroad.

There followed a great wave of features examining the recent past, especially the fate of the 15,000 to 30,000 *desaparecidos* ("the disappeared") during the *guerra sucia* ("dirty war") of terror, torture, and murder conducted from 1976 to 1983 by the generals against suspected subversives. There have also been a number of outstanding documentaries, such as Rodolfo Kuhn's (1934–1987) *Todo es ausencia* (*Only Emptiness Remains*, 1983) and Susana Muñoz and Lourdes Portillo's *Las madres de la Plaza de Mayo* (*The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*, 1985), both on the politically organized mothers


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(left) *Las madres de la Plaza de Mayo* (*The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*; Susana Muñoz and Lourdes Portillo, 1985).

of the *desaparecidos*. In 1989, the newly elected government of President Carlos Menem undertook a series of tough economic reforms designed to reduce public spending and privatize inefficiently run national industries.

With wholesale subsidies effectively eliminated, Argentine cinema came briefly to a halt in 1991, but a tax levied on video rentals helped provide production funds for films from Eliseo Subiela, *Últimas imágenes del naufragio* (*Last Images of the Shipwreck*, 1990); María Luisa Bemberg, *Yo, la peor de todas* (*I, the Worst of All*, 1990); Adolfo Aristarain, *Un lugar en el mundo* (*A Place in the World*, 1992); Fernando Solanas, *El viaje* (*The Voyage*, 1992); and Raúl de la Torre, *Funes, un gran amor* (*Funes: A Great Love*, 1993). All of these films, furthermore, were box-office hits in Argentina, whose domestic audience of 37 million seemed to find theatrical features attractive again after a five-year hiatus in full-scale production. By the early years of the twenty-first century, despite continuing economic and social crises, Argentine cinema was once again growing, due both to a dramatic expansion in the exhibition sector and the rise of independent distributors. At that time, the domestic industry was producing an average of thirty-five features a year.

Bolivia, Peru, and Chile

The Andean countries of Bolivia (population 10.5 million), Peru (30.5 million), and Chile (16.3 million) all experienced brief surges within their small domestic industries in the late 1960s. Following the example of Brazilian *cinema novo*, Bolivia's Jorge Sanjinés (b. 1937) and the Grupo Ukamau—a filmmaking collective named for *Ukamau* (1966), Sanjinés's award-winning first feature on Indian peasant life—produced the controversial *Yawar mallku* (*Blood of the Condor*, 1969), which became the most popular domestic feature made to date. Shot in neorealist fashion, the film shows the native Quechuan Indians being methodically wiped out through an involuntary sterilization program administered by the American "Progress Corps," and it was ultimately responsible for the Peace Corps' expulsion from the country.



Yawar mallku (*Blood of the Condor*; Jorge Sanjinés, 1969).

El coraje del pueblo (*The Courage of the People*), about a 1967 massacre of striking miners and their families by the army, was Sanjinés's first film in color and was produced for Italian television in 1971. In the same year, Bolivia experienced the right-wing coup that brought Colonel Hugo Bánzer Suárez to power. Sanjinés and several members of Grupo Ukamau sought asylum first in Peru, where they made *El enemigo principal* (*The Principal Enemy*, 1974), and then in Ecuador, where they produced *¡Fuera de aquí!* (*Out of Here!*, 1977).

Meanwhile, Sanjinés's cinematographer, Antonio Eguino, remained in Bolivia with the rest of the group and directed two successful features during the 1970s—*Pueblo chico* (*Small Town*, 1974) and *Chuquiago* (1977), the latter a four-part analysis of the social structure of La Paz that became the biggest box-office hit in the nation's history. With another change of government in 1979, Sanjinés returned to Bolivia and produced *Las banderas del amanecer* (*The Banners of Dawn*, 1983), a feature-length documentary recording the nation's history from 1979 through 1983. In 1984, Eguino also directed a film, *Amargo mar* (*Bitter Sea*), a fictionalized account of Chile's invasion of Bolivia in 1879, coproduced with Cuba, but few films have been made in the country since, owing to a 60 percent decrease in attendance—the result of the diffusion of television between 1985 and 1987, and rampant piracy during the 1990s and the 2000s. Nevertheless, the nation has an active film institute—Instituto Cinematográfico Boliviano (ICB)—founded in 1953, that produces about five features per year on digital video, some of which are transferred to 35mm for exhibition. Bolivia also has the necessary technical equipment to resume production when economic circumstances permit.

In Peru, which had produced little but government-sponsored newsreels (*actualidades*) and the ethnographic features of the so-called Cuzco school—for example, Eulogio Nishiyama, Luis Figueroa, and César Villanueva's *Kukuli* (1960) and *Jarawi* (1965)—there was little theatrical filmmaking activity until the work of Armando Robles Godoy, especially *La muralla verde* (*The Green Wall*, 1970), which was recognized both at home and abroad. In 1972, the government passed legislation designed to encourage national film production, and independent companies began to form during the 1970s and the 1980s to make both documentaries and commercial features. Especially notable in the latter category is the work of Francisco José Lombardi (b. 1949), whose films have all received international attention.

Also well known are Jorge Reyes's (b. 1938) neorealistic account of Peru's first labor organizer, *La familia Orozco* (*The Orozco Family*, 1982), and Federico García Hurtado's trilogy of Peruvian-Cuban co-productions, dealing with political events from the country's past. Another co-production (with Cuba, West Germany's ZDF, and England's Channel Four) was *Malabrigo* (1986), Alberto Durant's atmospheric evocation of corruption in a small fishing port. The future of the small Peruvian industry, like that of the democratic government of center-left president Alan García, was much in doubt in the late 1980s, when an escalating civil war between the army and the Maoist guerrillas of the Sendero Luminoso (the "Shining Path") movement threatened to tear the country apart. Inflation had reached a devastating 1 million percent when Alberto Fujimori was elected president in 1990.

By 1993, Fujimori had reduced that figure to 35 percent and partly contained the Sendero movement, at the price of seizing dictatorial power for himself. His government eliminated all state subsidies for the film industry, but individual careers continued to prosper, especially that of Francisco Lombardi, whose *Caídos del cielo* (*Fallen from the Sky*, 1990) won First Prize at the Montreal World Film Festival; and Federico García Hurtado, whose *La lengua de los zorros* (*The Language of Foxes*, 1992) creates a rich tapestry of Andean mythology to foreground and explicate the guerrilla war, but went unreleased until 1998.

From its earliest years through 1960, the Chilean film industry produced fewer than 160 films, half of them before the coming of sound. Yet the government had experimented with a national production company, Chile Films, in the 1940s, and in the 1950s and the 1960s, supported the development of university-based programs in both filmmaking and critical studies—for example, the Film Institute of the Catholic University was founded in 1955, and the Experimental Film Center of the University of Chile was founded in 1957. The country also had a distinguished tradition of political documentary film production, especially in the work of Sergio Bravo, for example, *Mimbre* (*Wicker*, 1957) and *Trilla* (*Threshing*, 1958).

With the election of Salvador Allende Gossens's socialist coalition ("Popular Unity") government in 1970, there was an explosion of cinematic expression, as Miguel Littin (b. 1942), whose debut feature, *El chacal de Nahueltoro* (*The Jackal of Nahueltoro*, 1969), had radicalized Chilean audiences a year earlier, was named to head the nation's film industry. The Allende regime was overthrown by a bloody CIA-backed coup

in 1973, but its three years in power marked the most creative era in Chilean film history. This brief period witnessed the production of such extraordinary documentaries as *Venceremos* (*We Shall Win*; Pedro Chaskel and Héctor Ríos, 1970), *Compañero Presidente* (Miguel Littin, 1971), *No es hora de llorar* (*No Time for Tears*; Pedro Chaskel and Luis Alberto Sanz, 1971), *El primer año* (*The First Year*; Patricio Guzmán, 1971), and *Abastecimiento* (*Stocking Up*; Raoul Ruiz, 1973). Also produced were such features as Helvio Soto's *Voto + fusil* (*The Vote and the Gun*, 1970) and Littin's *La tierra prometida* (*The Promised Land*, 1973; unreleased in Chile).

After General Augusto Pinochet's junta seized control of the government, murdering Allende and many of his followers—see, for example, Constantin Costa-Gavras's film *Missing* (1982)—most Popular Unity filmmakers went into exile: Miguel Littin to Mexico and Raoul Ruiz, Helvio Soto, and Patricio Guzmán and his Primer Año group to France, where they continued their political project. Guzmán's group produced *La batalla de Chile* (*The Battle of Chile*, 1975–1979) in Paris and later Cuba. This remarkable three-part documentary on the final year of the Allende presidency—*La insurrección de la burguesía* (*The Insurrection of the Bourgeoisie*, 1975), *El golpe de estado* (*The Coup d'État,* 1977), and *El poder popular* (*Popular Power*, 1979)—was assembled with the help of French documentarist Chris Marker. Marker also produced with the Chilean refugees his own account of the Allende years, the two-and-one-half-hour *La spirale* (1975).

Now living in Cuba, Patricio Guzmán (b. 1941) has since directed the Cuban-Venezuelan co-production *La rosa de los vientos* (*The Rose of the Winds*, 1985), a poetic meditation on the survival of Latin American identity despite 500 years of cultural colonization, and *En el nombre de Dios* (*In the Name of God*, 1987), a documentary for Spanish television about the role of the Roman Catholic Church in Chile in the years following the coup. Helvio Soto (1930–2001) directed only two features in exile. Yet Raoul Ruiz (b. 1941) has become one of the world's most prolific and experimental directors. Working mainly on commission in Portugal and France, Ruiz directed documentaries, features, video essays, and children's films, all informed by his vaguely surrealist sensibility and all shot at lightning speed, until his return to Chile in 1990.

In Mexico, Miguel Littin produced *Actas de Marusia* (*Letters from Marusia*, 1976), which draws a historical parallel between a 1907 massacre of Chilean mineworkers and the 1973 coup d'état. He also made *Viva el Presidente* (also known as *El recurso del método* [*The Discourse on Method*, 1978]) before directing *Alsino y el cóndor* (*Alsino and the Condor*, 1983) for Nicaragua's film institute, INCINE, and Cuba's ICAIC, but he never again achieved the stylistic complexity of his early work.



La batalla de Chile (*The Battle of Chile*; Patricio Guzmán, 1975).

Early in the 1980s, many exiled filmmakers were able to return to Chile. They found an economy wrecked by the junta and barely able to finance a handful of cheaply made films each year, most of them shot in 16mm and blown up to 35mm. In fact, between 1977 and 1990, only thirty-odd films and videos were produced in Chile, and these were shot under very difficult conditions. To this total should be added a number of militant anti-Pinochet documentaries made in

Chile but smuggled out of the country for distribution abroad—such features as Pablo Perelman's *Imagen latente* (*Latent Image*, 1987), a film about the Chilean desaparecidos (the disappeared ones), was edited in Canada and not released in Chile until 1991. In October 1988, the Pinochet regime was unexpectedly defeated in a national referendum, and the following year witnessed the first presidential/parliamentary election in two decades. During the 1990s, the government of President Patricio Aylwin Ozocar worked cautiously to restore democracy under the military's watchful eye, as film production officially resumed and the Viña del Mar festival was reopened in 1990 to greet a whole generation of exiled Chilean filmmakers, most notably Miguel Littin and Raoul Ruiz.

After several lean years in the mid-1990s, Chilean cinema bounced back toward the end of the decade, due to the exponential spread of multiplex theaters and the consolidation of several government agencies dedicated to stimulating domestic production. The landmark year was 1999, when a Chilean feature—Cristián Galaz's *The Sentimental Teaser* (*El chocotero sentimental*), based on a popular talk-radio show—broke box-office records to become the most successful domestic film of all time. Recently, however, Chile has been producing about ten features per year, only half of which reach local theaters. The popularity of mainstream American films has squeezed domestic work out of the market, leaving it with few profitable venues.

Venezuela, Colombia, and Central America

During the late 1960s, oil-rich Venezuela experienced a surge in documentary production, and in 1973, the government embarked on a program of developing a national cinema by guaranteeing production subsidies and regulating the distribution of foreign product. From 1975 to 1980, the state subsidized the production of nearly thirty films, Antonio Llerandi's *País portátil* (*Portable Country*, 1978) being Venezuela's biggest box-office hit to date. Various factors—including a sharp drop in world oil prices between 1982 and 1991, when the Gulf War drove them up again—weakened government support for the film industry. In the early 1990s, Venezuela experienced severe economic belt-tightening under the presidency of Carlos Andrés Pérez, leading to large-scale rioting and an attempted military coup in February 1992.

The election of Ramón José Velásquez in 1993 produced a return to order, and the budget of Venezuela's film development agency, Fondo de Fomento Cinematográfico (FONCINE), was quintupled in the period of relative prosperity that followed, enabling it to support such work as Olegario Barrera's *Fin de round* (*End of the Round*), Marilda Vera's *Señora Bolero*, and Fernando Venturini's feature-length documentary *Zoo* (all 1993). In contrast to most Latin American countries, Venezuelan audiences have always supported their cinema, which has won more than a hundred international prizes since FONCINE's founding in 1982. In 1993, the functions of FONCINE were shifted to the Autonomous National Center for Cinematography (CNAC), which became the main source of production funding for domestic films for the next six years.

Between 1993 and 1999, CNAC helped produce about thirty-five Venezuelan features, but when the new president, Hugo Chávez, took office in February 1999, he cut the agency's budget by 60 percent. Among other things, this put on hold the production of *Bolívar*, a large-scale big-budget biopic of Simón Bolívar (1783–1830), the liberator of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Panama. It also forced Venezuelan filmmakers to look for co-production deals with other Spanish-speaking countries to stay in business. With the passage of the Law of National Cinematography in 2005, however, the government developed an impressive structure for film and television production, distribution, and exhibition, which it had not previously had. Moreover, two organizations crucial to the growth of the Venezuelan film industry were established under the Ministry of Culture in 2006—the national film distributor Amazonia Films and Villa del Cine, a large studio complex for filming and high-technology post-production located near Caracas. With these facilities in place, Venezuela has continued to produce an average of ten to fifteen well-made features per year, a significant number for a country with a population of only 29 million, and it continues to rank fourth in Latin American annual production, behind Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico.

Neighboring Colombia (population 47.4 million) also produced a number of interesting documentaries in the late 1960s. In 1971, the government attempted to protect its small industry by requiring the exhibition of Colombian shorts at all first-run domestic theaters and mandating an admission-ticket surcharge to be rebated to producers. This had the effect of stimulating the production of shorts to the level of nearly a hundred per year by 1975, and in 1978, the government attempted to promote feature production by setting up a national film production company, Compañía de Fomento Cinematográfico (FOCINE).

When the Colombian government declared open war on the drug cartels in 1989, as a result of the assassination of presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán, the film industry was among the first to suffer, because the subsequent wave of "narco-terrorism" reduced box-office receipts by as much as 30 percent. Only four films were produced in the 1990–1991 season, and in 1992, FOCINE was dissolved by federal decree. Among its last productions were Víctor Gaviria's *Rodrigo D: No futuro* (1990; shot in 1986), a *cinéma vérité* feature about the street kids of Medellín; and Sergio Cabrera's *La estrategia del caracol* (*The Snail's Strategy*, 1992; shot in 1989), a comedy about political corruption in Bogotá. Recent Colombian films have understandably focused on the social and political problems resulting from terrorism and a virtual civil war among the government, leftist guerrillas, and drug cartels. The Law of Film, which was passed in 2003, is regularly used by producers, who can receive benefits as well as tax-deductible donations by private investors, and who are currently making about eight films annually for domestic screens, where they form an important part of the local market.

The Central American countries of Nicaragua (population 6.3 million) and El Salvador (population 6.3 million) both were sites of revolutionary filmmaking activity in the 1980s, despite the fact that neither is economically capable of producing more than a few films each year. The Nicaraguan Film Institute, Instituto Nicaraguense de Cine (INCINE), was established by the Sandinista government shortly after the Somoza dictatorship was overthrown in 1979. Though its resources were extremely limited, INCINE played host to numerous documentaries produced by filmmakers from other countries: the Brazilian Helena Solberg's *Nicaragua: From the Ashes* (1981), the West German/Chilean Tercer Cine Collective's *Women in Nicaragua: The Second Revolution* (1983), the Australian David Bradbury's *Nicaragua: No pasarán* (1984), and the Americans Susan Meiselas's *Living at Risk: The Story of a Nicaraguan Family* (1985) and Anita Clearfield's *Vacation Nicaragua* (1986).

In addition, there have been such ambitious features as *Alsino y el cóndor* (*Alsino and the Condor*; Miguel Littin, 1983), a Nicaraguan-Cuban-Mexican-Costa Rican co-production about the friendship between an American military adviser and a peasant boy; the U.S.-backed *Walker* (Alex Cox, 1987), dealing with an American adventurer who installed himself as president of Nicaragua in 1855; and Nicaragua's first domestic theatrical release, *Mujeres de la frontera* (*Women of the Frontier*; Ivan Arguello, 1987), co-produced with Cuba. Subsequent Nicaraguan-Cuban features, such as *El espectro de la guerra* (*The Ghost of War*; Ramiro Lacayo Deshón, 1988), have dealt mainly with the vagaries of the Contra war. In 1990, national elections removed the Sandinistas from power, and the new government threw the country open to market forces. Because Nicaragua has traditionally been the area's strongest film market, this meant fierce competition for INCINE from foreign distributors, most notably the American majors.



Ramiro Meneses in *Rodrigo D: No futuro* (Víctor Gaviria, 1990).

Guerrilla cinema activities are even more tenuous in neighboring El Salvador, where revolutionary collectives such as the Radio Venceremos film group have produced such documentaries as *La decisión de vencer* (*Decision to Win*, 1981) and *Tiempo de audacio* (*A Time of Daring*, 1983), both filmed on the front lines of the guerrilla war. There have also been such Salvadoran-U.S. co-productions as Glenn Silber and Teté Vasconcellos's Oscar-winning *El Salvador: Another Vietnam* (1981) and Frank Christopher's *In the Name of the People* (1985), both documentaries; and Oliver Stone's controversial feature *Salvador* (1986).

Other Central American countries producing militant cinema are Costa Rica (Valeria Sarmiento's *Un hombre, cuando es un hombre* [*A Man, When He Is a Man*, 1985]) and Guatemala (Gregory Nava's PBS-financed *El Norte* [*The North*, 1983] and Pamela Yates and Thomas Sigel's *When the Mountains Tremble* [1985]). The relative pacification of these regions during the 1990s caused a decline in such revolutionary cinema.

Cuba and the New Latin American Cinema

A small colonial film industry in Cuba before 1959 produced approximately 150 features in its sixty-year history. Many were Mexican-Cuban co-productions, such as Emilio Fernández's *La rosa blanca* (*The White Rose*, 1953), yet prerevolutionary Cuba had the highest film-attendance rates of any Latin American country. A foretaste of the future was provided in 1955, when Tomás Gutiérrez Alea (1928–1996) and Julio García Espinosa (b. 1926), both of whom had studied at Rome's Centro Sperimentale in the early 1950s and would become major figures in Cuban cinema after the revolution, produced the neorealistic *El mégano* (*The Charcoal Worker*), an indictment of peasant exploitation under the corrupt regime of President Fulgencio Batista. These same directors were the leading lights of Cine Rebelde, the rebel army's film unit, which produced two documentary shorts—*Esta tierra nuestra* (*This Is Our Land*; Gutiérrez Alea) and *La vivienda* (*Housing*; Espinosa)—for the National Board of Culture in 1959, before the unit became part of the revolutionary government's national film institute, Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC).

Similar to other revolutionary leaders before him, Fidel Castro understood the potential of motion pictures as a medium for mass education and persuasion—especially among a poor and largely illiterate populace—and, according to Alfredo Guevera, the founding director of ICAIC, the development of an indigenous film industry was in fact a major priority of the new government, second only to the national literacy campaign of 1960–1961. ICAIC was created on March 24, 1959, only three months after the overthrow of Batista, by an act of law declaring cinema to be a national art and mandating the "reeducation" of the Cuban people through its "fount of revolutionary inspiration, of culture, and of information." On that day, the Cuban film industry consisted of a few offices, some old 35mm equipment, a black-and-white laboratory, and a small group of people with virtually no filmmaking experience beyond the limited forays of Gutiérrez Alea and Espinosa. As screenwriter Manuel Pereira has said, Cuban cinema was born "without original sin." During the next twenty-four years, however, ICAIC managed to produce 112 features (both documentary and theatrical), approximately 900 documentary shorts, and more than 1,300 weekly newsreels.

The first films were brilliant, controversial documentaries—most prominently those of Santiago Álvarez (1919–1998)—for example, *Hanoi martes 13* (*Hanoi, Tuesday the 13th*, 1967), *LBJ* (1968), and *79 primaveras* (*79 Springtimes*, 1969)—which experimented in early Soviet fashion with every known variety of montage. Then in the late 1960s and the early 1970s came fiction features such as Gutiérrez Alea's *La muerte de un burócrata* (*Death of a Bureaucrat*, 1966) and *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (*Memories of Underdevelopment*, 1968), Humberto Solás's (b. 1941) *Lucía* (1968), and Manuel Octavio Gómez's (1934–1988) *La primera carga al machete* (*The First Charge of the Machete*, 1969), all of which mixed documentary and narrative technique in startlingly innovative ways and claimed international attention for the new Cuban cinema.

Memorias, for example, is a collage evoking the prerevolutionary consciousness of the intellectual bourgeoisie, set against the backdrop of the missile crisis of 1962, and *La primera carga* assumes the imaginary perspective of a news crew covering the 1868 war of independence. Perhaps the most formally original of all, *Lucía* tells the stories of three women by that name in three crucial periods in Cuban history, each in a filmic style that evokes its era. It provides a critique of Cuban society, both before and after the revolution, through an analysis of the changing roles of women. During the 1970s, epic-scale documentary features began to appear, astonishing international audiences with their sophistication and stylistic versatility.

At the same time, ICAIC was educating its domestic audience by taking *cine-mobiles*—trucks, wagons, and even boats equipped with projection gear and revolutionary films, as well as films such as those of Charlie Chaplin—to the provinces, in the manner of the Bolshevik "agit-trains" of the 1920s. (See Octavio Cortázar's [b. 1935] award-winning short *Por primera vez* [*For the First Time*, 1967].) Later, a full-scale film-education program for Cuba's 11 million people was established. When fully institutionalized, this program involved the dissemination of ICAIC's own periodical, *Cine cubano*, which features interviews, essays, and production information on Cuban and other Latin American cinema; mass screenings at the Cinemateca de Cuba for approximately 100,000 spectators per week; and two national television programs devoted to film education. (In the most popular, *24 por secondo* [*Twenty-Four Frames a Second*], the host described current films, showed clips from them, and discussed their history and structure.)

As Cuba's audience grew ever more sophisticated, so too did its already exciting cinema. The 1970s witnessed



Sergio Corrieri in *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (*Memories of Underdevelopment*; Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1968).

an explosion of genres and styles in such work as the black director Sergio Giral's (b. 1937) *El otro Francisco* (*The Other Francisco*, 1975), a complex experimental film that attempts a Marxist critique of the bourgeois liberalism underlying Cuba's first antislavery novel, Anselmo Suárez y Romero's *Francisco* (1839); Gutiérrez Alea's *La última cena* (*The Last Supper*, 1976), which uses the historical context of a late-eighteenth-century slave rebellion to fashion a hieratic confrontation between Christian and Afro-Cuban culture, and the same director's *Los sobrevivientes* (*The Survivors*, 1978), a darkly comic allegory of the bourgeoisie's descent from "civilization" through slaveholding to barbarism and finally cannibalism; and Sara Gómez's (1943–1974) *De cierta manera* (*One Way or Another*, 1974; released 1978), which interfuses a traditional Hollywood-style narrative about young lovers from different socioethnic backgrounds with *cinéma vérité* and agitational techniques to expose the vestiges of neocolonial racism and sexism still facing Cuba's new order.

The same theme is developed in the more conventionally structured *Retrato de Teresa* (*Portrait of Teresa*, 1979), Pastor Vega's first theatrical feature, which shows the persistence of machismo and the double standard facing working women in Cuban daily life. One of the most formally innovative films of the era was Manuel Octavio Gómez's *Una mujer, un hombre, una ciudad* (*A Woman, a Man, a City*, 1978), whose structure in many ways resembles that of *Citizen Kane*.

The 1980s marked the return to prominence of Humberto Solás, whose subsequent work included the Cuban-Spanish co-production *Cecilia* (1981), based on a novel by Cirilo Villaverde, an allegorical film of political intrigue among slaveholders in nineteenth-century Havana; and *Un hombre de éxito* (*A Successful Man*, 1986), a chronicle tracing the very different lives of two Havana brothers from 1932 through the Cuban revolution. The decade also witnessed Gutiérrez Alea's *Hasta cierto punto* (*Up to a Certain Point*, 1983), an attempt to renew the dialogue begun by Sara Gómez's *De cierta manera* at the level of the professional artist; Pastor Vega's *Habanera* (1984), an atypical European-style film of midlife crisis among Cuba's intellectual professionals; Jesus Diaz's (1941–2002) *Lejanía* (*Distance*, 1985), a film about the irreconcilable differences between Cuban and American society; and Juan Padrón's (b. 1947) bawdy animated feature *¡Vampiros en La Habana!* (*Vampires in Havana*, 1985).

The 1980s ended eclectically in Cuba, with a literate historical romance, Gutiérrez Alea's *Cartas del parque* (*Letters from the Park*, 1988); an agitational account of prerevolutionary terrorism, Fernando Pérez's (b. 1944)



Mario Balmaseda and Yolanda Cuéllar in *De cierta manera* (*One Way or Another*; Sara Gómez's, 1978); technical work was completed by Julio García Espinosa, Thomas González Pérez, and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea after Gómez's death in 1974.

Clandestinos (*Living Dangerously*, 1988); a colorful adaptation from Gabriel García Márquez, Fernando Birri's *Un señor muy viejo con unas alas enormes* (*A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, 1988); and a raucous contemporary satire, Juan Carlos Tabío's *Plaff!* (1989), which lampoons all things Cuban, from the socialist bureaucracy to Santeria.

In terms of production, ICAIC operates as a collective, in which there is—amazingly—no government oversight, and directors are free to choose their own subjects and write their own scripts. In the mid-1990s, Cuban cinema continued to evolve on course, but the U.S. trade embargo and the country's endemic poverty made creative improvisation within the industry a way of life. There was, for example, a chronic shortage of raw film stock. Moreover, U.S. disapproval had a negative impact on international sales, and many distributors wouldn't buy Cuban films for fear of boycotts by American producers. Furthermore, the United States froze all profits from Cuban bookings within its borders, so that only a handful of Cuban films are known to American audiences, and Unifilm, ICAIC's main American distributor, was driven into bankruptcy in the early 1980s by the squeeze. (In the early 1990s, the embargo was eased to allow for limited payment for "cultural goods" between both countries; it was reimposed in 1994 but eased again with the reestablishment of diplomatic relations in 2014.)

Yet in a short span of time, Cuban cinema and Cuban spectators came a long way, and they provided enormous inspiration, not to mention valuable production and postproduction assistance, to militant film movements all over the hemisphere. The Festival of New Latin American Cinema held annually in Havana became an event of international importance following its inception in 1979 and, during the 1980s, was widely considered to be the most important Spanish-language festival in the world, surpassing both Barcelona and Madrid in attendance and market share. At the conclusion of the 1986 festival, Fidel Castro announced the creation of the New Latin American Cinema Foundation in Havana, under the direction of Nobel Prize–winning novelist Gabriel García Márquez, and the establishment of the International Film and Television School

(La Escuela de Cine y Televisión), commonly known as "the School of the Three Worlds," just outside Havana in San Antonio de las Baños, under the direction of Argentine documentarist Fernando Birri, a pioneer of the New Latin American Cinema movement.

All of this changed in the early 1990s, as the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union forced Cuba into an era of extreme cultural and economic isolation, leaving it with no allies but China and North Korea. Cuban cinema entered a period of sharp decline: from its highwater mark of eight to ten features and forty to forty-five shorts annually, production fell off to two or three films per year. Both the International Film School and the Festival of New Latin American Cinema experienced budget crises, and in 1992, ICAIC was merged with the film department of the armed forces to ensure its survival. A handful of revolutionary films continued to appear in the period 1991–1993, but most films exhibited in Cuba at this time were locally produced genre fare or ideological tracts from North Korea.

As the financial situation worsened, political repression grew—in 1992, Daniel Díaz Torres's (b. 1948) *Alicia en el pueblo de maravillas* (*Alice in Wonderland*), a mildly critical satire of contemporary Cuban life, was banned as "counterrevolutionary" after playing to record crowds for four days in Havana; and Gutiérrez Alea's *Fresa y chocolate* (*Strawberry and Chocolate*, 1993), with its open sympathy for Cuba's gays, received only limited distribution. Several other films were banned outright that year, and a number of Cuban filmmakers (Jesus Diaz, Sergio Giral, etc.) went into exile in other Latin American countries. In either desperation or defiance, Castro declared that Cuba, with its now 11 million people, was the "last bastion of Marxist-Leninist purity" on earth. Yet as fuel shortages caused the government to close theaters and dim the lights at ICAIC, it seems clear that Cuba's revolutionary cinema, if not its revolution, had come full circle to its beginnings with no cinema at all.

Thanks in part to investment by European and Canadian companies in the tourism and mining industries, Cuban cinema started to grow again in the late 1990s, and a Cuban film appeared at Havana's Twentieth Festival of New Latin American Cinema in December 1998 for the first time in several years. This was Fernando Pérez's poetic meditation on day-to-day existence in contemporary Cuba, *Life Is to Whistle* (*La vida es silbar*), and it won the top award, signaling a revival of Cuban cinema. In that same year, ICAIC was put under new leadership, and veteran filmmakers produced new work aggressively promoting digital technology as a means of expanding feature production, with or without outside money and its influences—for example, Juan Padrón's animated digital feature *Vampires in Havana II* (*Más vampiros de La Habana*, 2003) was produced entirely with ICAIC funds. (Here, as elsewhere, Cuba is a leader: first, as the only Latin American country to have developed its own animation industry, and second, as the first to convert to 3-D digital imagery.)



Life Is to Whistle (*La vida es silbar*; Fernando Pérez, 1998).

Africa

North Africa

As film historian Clyde Taylor points out, more than fifty African nations have gained independence since World War II—most of them since 1960—yet the African film market is small by Western standards. It can logically be divided between North African and sub-Saharan cinema.

In the north, the most prominent film-producing country is Algeria, whose film industry was nationalized shortly after the nation won its independence in a savage war of liberation with France that lasted from 1954 to 1962. Algeria's first films concerned that struggle and were collectively known as *cinéma mudjahad* ("freedom-fighter cinema"). Several of these films, such as Ahmed Rachedi's (b. 1938) *L'aube des damnés* (*Dawn of the Damned*, 1965) and Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina's (b. 1934) *Le vent des Aurés* (*The Wind of Aurés*, 1966), were of superior quality, but it was not until the *cinéma djidid* ("new cinema") movement of the 1970s that Algeria established an authentic and sophisticated, albeit state-controlled, alternative cinema, especially in the work of Ali Ghalem (*Mektoub*, 1970),

CHRONIQUE DES ANNEES DE BRAISE

UN FILM DE M. LAKHDAR HAMINA



and Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina—*Chronique des années de braise* (*Chronicle of the Years of Embers*, 1975), an epic film about a family's coming to revolutionary consciousness in the crucial period from 1939 to 1954, which won the Grand Prix at Cannes. Algeria, whose population is approximately 39.5 million, produced about five or six features and sixty to eighty shorts a year until the early 1990s, and it has also co-produced films with Italy (Gillo Pontecorvo's *La battaglia di Algeri* [*The Battle of Algiers*, 1966]) and Egypt (Youssef Chahine's *al-Asfour* [*The Sparrow*, 1973]).

Moreover, there are a number of native Algerian filmmakers who live and work in France. Starting in 1992, the government of Algeria was faced with a militant Islamic insurgency that continued into the new century and at times approached the dimensions of a civil war. Filmmaking became extremely difficult amid the violence and terror unleashed by these hostilities and was nearly impossible after the abrupt shutting down of the main government funding agencies for cinema in 1997 and 1998. Algeria's state-subsidized cinema had been provisionally privatized in 1993 and was now cut off from government funds altogether. Although a handful of films have since been made in the formerly banned Berber language, most Algerian directors now live and work abroad.

Neighboring francophone Tunisia (population 11 million), which has been the host of the Carthage Film Festival since 1966, has a small government-supported industry that has co-produced such notable features as the documentaries of Férid Boughedir—*Caméra d'Afrique: 20 Years of African Cinema* (1983) and *Caméra arabe: The Young Arab Cinema* (1987), both with France. In 1986, an all-Tunisian production, Nouri Bouzid's *Rih al saad* (*Man of Ashes*), won the Golden Prize at the twenty-second Taormina Film Festival in Sicily, and its companion piece, *Sfayah min dhahab* (*The Golden Horseshoes*, 1989), was an official jury selection three years later at Cannes. Férid Boughedir's intimate coming-of-age comedy *Halfaween, asfoor al satah* (*Halfaween, the Bird of the Roofs*, 1990; also known as *Halfaouine: L'enfant des terrasses* [*Halfaouine: Boy of the Terraces*]), broke all Tunisian box-office records in 1991.

Tunisia produces only two or three films a year, usually co-productions with France or Morocco. Among the more interesting developments for Tunisian cinema has been the emergence of three of North Africa's only women filmmakers: Kalthoum Bornaz (b. 1945), *Keswa, al-Khayt al-Dhai* (*Keswa: The Lost Thread*, 1997); IDHEC-trained former editor Moufida Tlatli (b. 1947), *Samt el Qusur* (*Silences of the Palace*, 1994) and *La saison des hommes* (*The Season of Men*, 2000); and Selma Baccar, *La fleur de l'oubli* (*Flower of Oblivion*, 2007). Because of the scarcity of theaters in Tunisia, the country's film production tends to focus on its biennial film festival, where about five domestic features are shown per year, including Nouri Bouzid's award-winning *Making Of* (2007), about the psychology of a suicide bomber. In 2013, Abdellatif Kechiche became the first Tunisian director to win the Palme d'Or at Cannes with his erotic coming-of-age drama *Blue Is the Warmest Color* (French title: *La vie d'Adèle, Chapitre 1 & 2* [*The Life of Adele, Chapters 1 & 2*]).

Morocco (population 33.8 million), the other country of the Maghreb (literally, "the sunset"; the region of northern Africa that extends most prominently into the Mediterranean and includes Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco), made only about twenty features in the years from independence in 1956 to 1980. Yet these films were notably more experimental than those of Algeria and Tunisia, perhaps because of Morocco's relatively high cultural level and active *ciné-club* tradition, which created the grounds for a system of government support through the Centre Cinématographique Marocaine (CCM). Between 1980 and 1984, thirty new films were produced under its auspices.



Carolyn Chelby and Selim Boughedir in *Halfaouine: L'enfant des terrasses* (*Halfaouine: Boy of the Terraces*; Férid Boughedir, 1990).

(left) Poster for *Chronique des années de braise* (*Chronicle of the Years of Embers*; Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina, 1975).

Among Moroccan films notable for their formal stylization are Moumen Smihi's *44 ou les récits de la nuit* (*44 or Tales of the Night*, 1985), Mohamed Aboulouakar's *Hadda* (1986), and Najib Sefraoui's *Chams* (1986). Morocco has the most successful system of state funding in all of North Africa, making it the region's leading producer, with forty features during the 1990s. Some of its directors, such as Souheil Ben-Barka, who was trained at the Centro Sperimentale in Italy and worked as an assistant director to Pier Paolo Pasolini during the 1960s, have international ambitions. In fact, Ben-Barka, who has been director general of the CCM since the late 1980s, made two big-budget epics with international casts during the 1990s—*Les cavaliers de la gloire* (*Horsemen of Glory*, 1993) and *L'ombre du pharaon* (*Shadow of the Pharoah*, 1996).

Other Moroccan filmmakers aim more exclusively at the local market, which they managed to dominate in the 2010s. In the early years of the twenty-first century, Morocco inaugurated the International Film Festival of Marrakech (FIFM), and its industry grew increasingly robust, so that it currently releases an average of ten features annually and brings home numerous festival awards.

Egypt (population 89.3 million) is the other North African country with a sizable film industry, although it is, by and large, relentlessly commercial and star-oriented—for example, actor Omar Sharif (1932–2015) was a product of the Egyptian star system. Centered in a huge Cairo studio complex called "Cinema Town," Egyptian cinema has long dominated the Arab world, with its potential audience of 300 million, and is the third most prolific in the world at large, after those of the United States and India. Egypt turned out seventy to eighty features annually, until the early 1990s, with significant state support. Its filmmakers are capable of producing such complex individual films as Shadi Abdes-Salam's (b. 1930) *Al-momia* (*The Night of Counting the Years*, 1969), and it had a director of international standing in Youssef Chahine (1926–2008), whose most important works include his autobiographical trilogy—*Iskandarija . . . Lih?* (*Alexandria . . .*



Naglaa Fathy and Mohsen Mohieddin in *Iskandarija . . . Lih?* (*Alexandria . . . Why?*; Youssef Chahine, 1978).

Why?, 1978), *Hadduta misrija* (*An Egyptian Story*, 1982), and *Iskandarija, kaman wakaman* (*Alexandria, Again and Forever*, 1990)—which is also a social history of modern Egypt.

Developments in the 1980s included a marked relaxation in government censorship and the emergence of several women directors, most of them graduates of the Egyptian Film Institute, who make films on feminist themes, among them Asmaa El-Bakry (*Beggars and Proud Ones*, 1991) and Inas Al-Degheidy (*Lady Killers*, 1992), as well as the surrealistic visual stylist Daoud Abdel Sayed.

In the early 1990s, Egyptian cinema experienced a crisis that resulted in steeply declining levels of production—eighteen features in 1994, twenty-five in 1995, twenty-two in 1996, sixteen in 1997, and twenty in 1998—the lowest numbers in fifty years. The reasons were twofold: in the short term, the Gulf War in 1991 halted Egypt's distribution to many of its Arab neighbors; in the long term, satellite television and other forms of electronic entertainment began to cut heavily into its domestic market. Furthermore, state-run television, in the form of the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU), began to compete head to head with the film industry by going into production and releasing its telefilms both theatrically and on the air. Ultimately, Egypt's film producers were able to partner with ERTU, and by the late 1990s, yearly production had begun to rise again. As a result, for the first time in history, the nine top-grossing films of 1999 were domestic productions (although 85 percent of them were comedies). Veterans such as Youssef Chahine produced new work—*Al-Akhar* (*The Other*, 1999) and *Silence . . . on tourne* (*Quiet, We're Rolling*, 2001)—and a new generation of directors emerged with debut features.

Sub-Saharan Africa

The most important film-producing country in sub-Saharan Africa, and also one of the first, is Senegal (population 13.6 million), largely owing to the work of one director, Ousmane Sembène (1923–2007), who studied filmmaking in Moscow with Mark Donskoi and was also a distinguished writer of short stories and novels, as well as of his own screenplays. Sembène made all of his films outside of the French Ministry of Cooperation program, which assisted production in its former sub-Saharan colonies from 1962 to 1980. Most historians identify his twenty-minute short *Borom Sarret* (1963), which won a prize at the International Festival of Tours, as the first indigenous black African film. Sembène followed this realistic account of a day



Mbissine Thérèse Diop in *La noire de . . .* (*Black Girl*; Ousmane Sembène, 1966).

in the life of an impoverished Dakar cartman with his sixty-minute *La noire de . . .* (*Black Girl*, 1966; adapted from his own story). Arguably the first sub-Saharan feature and one of the first significant anticolonial documents of Africa, *La noire de . . .* describes a young black woman who loses her cultural identity as a maid in service to a French family.

Mandabi (*The Money Order*, 1968), Sembène's first full-length color feature, was shot in both French and Wolof, a language spoken by 90 percent of the Senegalese people. A muted social satire about the humiliating ordeal of an illiterate Dakar workingman trying to cash a check sent to him by his nephew in Paris, it took prizes at international festivals in Tashkent, New York, and Atlanta, and became the first Senegalese feature to be distributed commercially in its home country.

His *Emitai* (1971) mixes epic and documentary aspirations in its rendition of a confrontation between a group of Diola villagers and French troops sent to requisition their harvest during World War II. The film, whose title means "god of thunder" in Diola, was shot almost entirely in that language and concludes with the brutal massacre of the villagers. Although it won major awards at Moscow and Tashkent, *Emitai* could not be distributed in Senegal because of pressure from the French government, which has maintained close economic and cultural ties with its former colony since independence was granted in 1959. Sembène's next film, *Xala* (1974), was adapted from a short novel he published in French the same year. Its title, usually translated as



Thierno Leye in *Xala* (Ousmane Sembène, 1974).

The Curse, actually means "impotence" in Wolof, and the film is a ferocious satire on the black bourgeoisie of the new Senegalese republic. Its protagonist is a corrupt bureaucrat who is stricken by impotence on the night of marrying his third wife and must exorcise the curse by resorting to a degrading primitive ritual.

Sembène then made *Ceddo* (1977), which he adapted from his own novel and produced himself with the profits from *Xala* and a government-sponsored loan. It collapses several centuries of colonial African history into the events of several days in the exemplary tale of an Islamic imam (spiritual teacher) who dethrones a village king and imposes his religion on the people. The imam ultimately is killed by the *ceddo* ("outsiders" in Wolof), who reject his claims. Richly stylized and highly controversial in a country that is 80 percent Muslim, *Ceddo* was banned by the Senegalese government for eight years. In the meantime, Sembène pursued his career as a writer and planned his projected magnum opus—a six-hour epic on the life of Samori Toure, the nineteenth-century West African nationalist who resisted French and British imperialism.

While seeking funding for *Samori*, Sembène directed (with Thierno Faty Sow) the Senegalese-Tunisian-Algerian co-production *Camp de Thiaroye* (*Camp Thiaroye*, 1988). This powerful anticolonial film is based on an actual massacre ordered by the French army against black veterans returning to Senegal from World War II. In 1992, Sembène made *Guelwaar*, about a historical confrontation between Muslims and Christians at the funeral of the anticolonial freedom fighter named in the title; and in 2000, at the age of seventy-seven, Sembène produced *Faat Kiné*, a domestic drama about a female Senegalese gas-station operator that he dedicated to the "everyday heroism

of African women." Sembène's last film was *Mooladde* (2004), a winner of multiple international awards that dealt with the subject of female circumcision in a small African village.

Another important Senegalese filmmaker is Djibril Diop Mambéty (1945–1998), whose *Touki Bouki* (1973) is widely regarded as Africa's first avant-garde film and whose *Hyenas* (1992) is adapted from Dürrenmatt's absurdist play *The Visit*. Near the end of his life, Mambéty, who wrote his own screenplays, was working on a series of short films collectively titled "Tales of Ordinary People," of which he completed only *Le franc* (1994) and *La petite vendeuse de soleil* (*The Little Girl Who Sold the Sun*, 1999). Other Senegalese filmmakers are: Mahama Johnson Traoré (b. 1942), *Reou-takh* (*The Big City*, 1971) and *Njangaan* (1974); Safi Faye (b. 1943), the first sub-Saharan African woman to make a feature, *Kaddu-beykat* (*Letter from a Village*, 1976); Ben Diogaye Beye (b. 1947), *Seye seyeti* (*One Man, Many Women*, 1980); Ababakar Samb-Makharam (1934–1987), *Kodou* (1971) and *Jom* (1981); Paulin Soumanou Vieyra (1925–1987), a former documentarist whose collaborative short *Afrique sur Seine* (*Africa on the Seine*, 1955) is sometimes described as the foundation stone of African cinema; and the Vietnamese documentarist Trinh T. Minh-ha, who worked in Africa during the 1980s, *Réassemblage* (1982) and *Naked Spaces* (1985).

Between 1968 and 1983, Senegal produced twenty-six features, most of them with the assistance of the French Ministry of Cooperation and the government-backed SNPC (Société Nouvelle de Promotion Cinématographique). When this agency was dismantled in the middle of an economic crisis in 1989, the Senegalese industry was privatized and, after a brief hiatus, surged forward again with the work of such third-generation directors as Moussa Touré (*Toubab-Bi*, 1991) and short-film specialist Mansour Sora Wade (*Taal pexx*, 1991; *Aida Souka*, 1992; and *Piticumi*, 1992). There has been a steady decline in Senegalese film production since the 2000s, but several new directors have made their debut features nonetheless—for example, Moussa Sene Absa (*Madame Brouette*, 2004) and Cheikh Ndiye (*L'appel des arènes* [*Wrestling Grounds*, 2005]).

Other sub-Saharan film-producing countries are Mali (population 14.5 million), Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta; population 17.3 million), the Ivory Coast (population 24 million), Ghana (population 27 million), Nigeria (population 177.5 million), and Angola (population 24.4 million). Mali has two filmmakers whose work is becoming known in the West, both of whom produce, as did Sembène, outside the system of French assistance available to most of France's former colonies. They are Souleymane Cissé (b. 1940), who was trained in Moscow, and Cheick Oumar Sissoko (b. 1945). Cissé's films—for instance, *Finye* (*The Wind*, 1982) and *Yeelen* (*Brightness*, 1987)—are open-ended and mythic, depending on Malian oral tradition and inviting audience interaction;



Aoua Sangare in *Yeelen* (*Brightness*; Souleymane Cissé, 1987).



Ai Keita in *Sarraounia* (Med Hondo, 1986).

whereas Sissoko's *Nyamanton* (*The Garbage Boys*, 1986), *Finzan* (*A Dance for the Heroes*, 1989), *Guimba* (*Guimba the Tyrant*, 1995), and *La genèse* (*Genesis*, 1999), for example, are more typically Western in structure and tend toward social satire.

In Burkina Faso, the work of Gaston Kaboré (b. 1952) (*Wend Kuuni* [*God's Gift*, 1982]) and Idrissa Ouedraogo (b. 1954) (*Yam daabo* [*The Choice*, 1986]) has received marked attention. Ouedraogo's films are often family dramas whose appeal reaches beyond national borders, and some of his more recent work was filmed on locations outside of Burkina Faso. The nation's capital, Ouagadougou, is the home of the Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers (FEPACI) and has been host to the annual Pan-African Film Festival (Festival Panafricain du Cinéma de Ouagadougou, or FESPACO) since 1969.

From anglophone Ghana have come Kwaw Ansah's *Love Brewed in the African Pot* (1980) and Kwesi Owusu's *Ouaga* (1988), a documentary on the work of FESPACO. In Nigeria, IDHEC-trained Ola Balogun (b. 1945) has produced eleven anglophone features since 1972, including *Cry Freedom!* (1981) and *A deusa negra* (*Black Goddess*, 1983). Yet Nigeria also has a large popular film industry centered in the Surulere district of Lagos ("Nollywood") that, since the late 1990s, has been producing about 1,000 features a year, most of them shot on digital video in several days for less than $15,000. These films (known locally as "home videos") have become as popular as those from Hollywood and "Bollywood" with Africa's English-speaking audiences and have had a broad influence on Africa's popular culture. (See Chapter 22.)

By 2002, the Nigerian industry was generating revenues of about $45 million and had developed its own star system, as well as a burgeoning bootleg market. Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) Angola established a film institute in 1977, two years after liberation from Portugal, and has produced a major director in Ruy Duarte de Carvalho (b. 1941). There are also occasional lusophone films from Guinea-Bissau—for example, Flora Gomes's *Mortu nega* (*Death Denied/Those Whom Death Refused,* 1988)—as well as francophone films from Cameroon; the Democratic Republic of the Congo, formerly Zaire; and the eastern island of Madagascar. Also significant is the work of several African filmmakers living abroad. Especially notable is the Mauritanian Med Hondo (b. 1936), whose *Soleil O* (*O Sun*, 1970; after a song sung by African slaves transported to the West Indies), *Les bicots-nègres, vos voisins*

(*The Negroes, Your Neighbors*, 1973), and *West Indies* (1979) are vigorous indictments of slavery, racism, and the neocolonial mentality.

For *Sarraounia* (1986), Med Hondo returned to Africa (Burkina Faso) to direct an epic account of a tribal queen's victory over French expeditionary forces in central Africa in 1898–1899. Other exiles are the UCLA-trained Ethiopian Haile Gerima (b. 1946), whose monumental docudrama *Mirt sost shi amit* (*Harvest: 3,000 Years*, 1975) was shot on location in Ethiopia on the eve of the revolution there, and whose feature *Sankofa* (1993) re-creates the slave era at Ghana's Cape Coast castle, in the same way that his documentary *Adwa* (1999) reconstructs the legendary Ethiopian victory over Italy in 1896; and Sarah Maldoror (b. Sarah Ducades, 1929), a French resident of Guadeloupan parentage trained in Moscow, whose tense film of the Angolan liberation struggle, *Sambizanga* (1973), was shot secretly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the actual revolution there and won many international awards.

The Middle East

Excluding Egypt, which was previously treated with the North African nations, the only major film-producing countries in the Middle East are Iran and Israel. However, several Arab states made interesting contributions to world cinema during the 1980s and the 1990s. Lebanon (population 4.8 million), which once had the best studios and laboratories in the Arab world, continued to make films during a devastating civil war from 1975 to 1990. The postwar period was marked by a strong industrial renewal and multiple award-winning features—for example, Jean-Claude Codsi's *Story of a Return* (*Histoire d'un retour*, 1994), Randa Chahal Sabag's *The Kite* (*Le cerf-volant*, 2003), Nadine Labaki's *Caramel* (2006), Dannielle Arbi's *A Lost Man* (2007), and Georges Hachem's *Stray Bullet* (*Rsasa Taysheh*, 2010).

Since the early 2000s, Lebanon has been the home of the Beirut International Film Festival. Syria (population 22 million), whose films were funded through the National Film Organization (NFO), made *Dreams of the City* (*Ahlam al madina*; Mohamed Malas, 1984) and *The Extras* (*al-Kombars*; Nabil Maleh, 1992) and produced on average two films a year, until its own civil war disrupted the industry in 2011. Libya (population 6.2 million) produced *Shrapnel* (*Alshazhia*; Mohamed Abdul Salam, 1987), and the Sudan (population 30.1 million) made *Tajoog* (Gadalla Gubara, 1984) and *Paradise Slum* (*Deim dar el-naemi*; Cornelia Schlede, 1986).

Iraq (population 36 million) produced films from 1945 to 1990, and its cinema was formerly controlled through the Ba'thist General Organization for Film and Theater. It produced its first epic in 1980, the $15 million *al-Gaadisiyya*, directed by the Egyptian Salah Abouseif, based on a seventh-century historical episode, in which outnumbered Arab forces repulsed an army of invading infidels. Like most Iraqi films made during the nation's bloody war with Iran, 1980–1988—for example, Sahib Haddad's *Flaming Borders* (*Al-hudud al multahiba*, 1986)—this one is redolent with militant nationalism. After the Gulf War of 1991, Iraqi cinema ceased to function and has produced nothing for export since, a situation not alleviated by the American-led invasion and occupation of 2003–2012.

Iran

From the coming of sound through the Islamic revolution of 1979, the media of Iran (population 78.2 million)—similar to those of Latin America—were dominated by the United States through the powerful lobby of the Motion Picture Export Association and, after 1960, the Television Program Export Association. A domestic feature-film industry, therefore, developed in Iran along America-oriented, escapist lines; between 1931 and the revolution, Iran produced more than 1,100 motion pictures. Between 1966 and 1976, a progressive national film movement came into being as foreign-trained directors, such as Fereydoun Rahnema, Davood Mollapour, and Masoud Kimiai, made their first features. Various film festivals—particularly, the Tehran International Festival, inaugurated in 1972—were established with the support of the Ministry of Art and Culture to showcase the new work.

The breakthrough film for this Iranian New Wave or New Cinema (*cinema motefavet*) was Dariush Mehrjui's (b. 1939) second feature, *The Cow* (*Gaav*, 1969). This starkly realistic account of peasant life, adapted from a short story by the leftist writer Gholam-Hossein Saedi, was banned in Iran for more than a year, but won prizes at the Chicago and Venice festivals in 1971. In 1974, the New Wave directors created a film cooperative known as the Progressive Filmmakers' Union (PFU; Kanun-e Sinemagaran-e Pishro), which produced Sohrab Shahid Saless's *Still Life* (*Tabi at-e-bijan*, 1974), Mehrjui's *The Cycle* (*Dayerh-e-mina*, 1974; one of the few Iranian films at the time to be distributed in the United States, in 1979), and Parviz Kimiavi's *Stone Garden* (*Bagh-e-sanghi*, 1975). In that year, Iran released

eighty films, exceeding the production of both Egypt and Turkey, including Bahman Farmanara's (b. 1942) *Prince Ehtejab* (*Shazdeh Ehtejab*, 1974), a visually stunning adaptation of a contemporary Persian novel about a despotic pre-Pahlavi ruler that became a milestone in Iranian cinema. Yet an economic squeeze encouraged by American distributors brought a halt to independent production in Iran, and during 1977 and 1978, few features or documentaries of any worth were released.

In 1979, Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, Iran's ruler since 1941, was overthrown by the Islamic revolution of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The Khomeini government imposed strict theocratic (that is, Muslim fundamentalist) censorship, and many filmmakers fled the country. By 1983, only forty films had been made in the four years since the revolution, and twenty-three of these had been banned. In that same year, however, the government sponsored the creation of the Farabi Cinema Foundation, a quasi-independent organization whose mission was to increase the quality and quantity of Iranian films. Farabi restricted imports and helped fund domestic production through a combination of low-interest loans and subsidies. In 1984, annual production rose from twenty-three to fifty-seven films, and by 1991, Iran was producing seventy films a year to approximate its prerevolutionary high of ninety in 1972.

Congruent with the Farabi Foundation's success, Islamic censors became more tolerant and many former New Wave directors returned to Iran. At the same time, Farabi helped recruit and train a new generation of filmmakers, whose works often deal candidly with social and political problems, despite censorship limitations. There were even a handful of women directors exploring feminist themes—a considerably daring practice within the context of patriarchal Islamic fundamentalism. By the end of the 1980s, the financial and technical infrastructures were in place for Iran to once again achieve a high level of annual production, which currently averages about fifty features per year.

It was in the 1990s, however, that the Iranian cinema became what officials at the 1992 Toronto International Film Festival called "one of the pre-eminent national cinemas in the world today," and it has maintained



Prince Ehtejab (*Shazdeh Ehtejab*; Bahman Farmanara, 1974).

that position in the 2010s. This has in part to do with the Iranian industry's more or less definitive division of product between commercial projects ("populist cinema") and what are self-consciously labeled art films ("art cinema")—subsidized productions not dependent on box-office success for their directors' continued creative health. However, some films, such as Abbas Kiarostami's *Through the Olive Trees* (*Zire darakhtan zaitun,* 1994) and Mohsen Makhmalbaf's *Gabbeh* (1996), have occasionally proved quite popular with local audiences, despite their "art cinema" status.

This art-film aesthetic is part of the Farabi Cinema Foundation's continuing commitment to the promotion of "superior Iranian films," not so much to export the Islamic revolution as to establish Iran's cultural prominence on the world stage. Although art films constitute no more than 15 percent of the total national product, this effort has been overwhelmingly successful—from placing Iranian films in international festivals 44 times in 1988, the number rose to 744 placements in 1995, with an attendant rise in the number of prizes from 2 in 1988 to 41 in 1995. Furthermore, the election of the relatively moderate Mohammad Khatami as president in 1997 led ultimately to the elimination of state script approval.

This brought to the industry a new degree of legal freedom, permitting filmmakers to deal with certain social issues for the first time since the revolution. Minster of Cinema Seifolluah Dad also created the National Film Organization, with the purpose of promoting foreign investment and increasing annual production from 56 films in 2000 to 109 by 2005, and expanding the exhibition sector from its 2001 capacity of 210 screens to 360 during the same period, effectively doubling the size of the domestic market to absorb accelerated production. The election of conservative president Mahmoud Ahmedinejad in 2005 prompted some to expect fundamental changes in the arts, but he announced that he had no intention of restricting the diversification of ideas and tastes, and Iranian filmmaking continued pretty much as it had in the preceding years. The administration of President Hassan Rouhani, elected in 2013, has done little to alter the situation.

Among prerevolutionary directors, Dariush Mehrjui directed *Hamoon* (1990), a Felliniesque comedy of modern marriage; and Bahram Beizai (b. 1938) is particularly admired for the antiwar children's film *Bashu, the Little Stranger* (1985; released in 1989). Other art-cinema directors who received international recognition during the 1990s were Majid Majidi (b. 1959)—*The Color of Paradise* (*Rang-e Khoda*, 1999)—and Jafar Panahi (b. 1960)—*The White Balloon* (*Badkonake sefid*, 1995).



Through the Olive Trees (*Zire darakhtan zaitun;* Abbas Kiarostami, 1994).

Yet the most important postrevolutionary figure in Iranian cinema is unquestionably Abbas Kiarostami (b. 1940), who writes the screenplays for most of his own features, as well as executing their production design and editing. Although he made a handful of shorts and features before 1979, virtually all of Kiarostami's major work was done from the mid-1980s through the present, most of it produced for the Center for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, whose film division he founded in 1970. Known for his minimalist, self-reflexive style, involving the use of extended long takes and scant dialogue, Kiarostami's cinema has been called "interventionist" and "interactive," because it tends to put its viewers in a position that blurs the distinction between life and art, between documentary and fiction. The film that established Kiarostami's reputation with Western critics was *Where Is the Friend's Home?* (*Khane-ye doust kodjast?*, 1987), a deceptively simple story in which a grade-school student goes on an Odyssean quest to return his classmate's misplaced notebook.

The paradigm of reflexivity was central to his next film, *Close-Up* (*Nema-ye Nazdik*, 1990), which was based on a true story: an unemployed bus passenger convinces a fellow traveler that he is the famous Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf (see below) and that he is going to make a docudrama starring members of her family. The family subsequently sues him for fraud, and Kiarostami appears as himself to direct a film about the court proceedings, which he re-stages using the "real" participants, with a different ending.

This play on the narrow distinction between reality and fiction similarly informs *Life, and Nothing More*



Babak Ahmed Poor (center) in *Where Is the Friend's Home?* (*Khane-ye doust kodjast?*; Abbas Kiarostami, 1987).

(also known as *And Life Goes On* [*Zendegi va digar hich*, 1991]), in which Kiarostami and his son set out to find his two performers from *Where Is the Friend's Home?* after their village has been destroyed in an earthquake. When he arrives in the region, he hires two local quake survivors to play him and his son, who then go on to find the two boys, also played by actors. The devastation caused by the earthquake is real, and the circumstances of Kiarostami's quest only slightly fictionalized, so that once again the cleavage between film and reality is never quite clear.

The third film in what is now known as Kiarostami's "Northern Iran" or "Earthquake" trilogy was *Through the Olive Trees* (1994). Here a director, played by Kiarostami, casts a film about the recent quake with quake victims, whose personal lives become so intertwined with their roles that he has to rewrite the film to straighten them out. The reflexive element in these three films is so apparently natural and understated that it never seems like a stylistic fetish; similarly, the empathy with which Kiarostami approaches the human suffering in them is unmistakable. These tendencies reached their apex in *Taste of Cherry* (*T'am e guilass*, 1997), which was banned by the Iranian government until it won the 1997 Cannes Palme d'Or. In this film, a middle-aged man wishing to kill himself searches for someone courageous or venal enough (because he is offering a large sum of money) to break Islamic law by assisting him. We never learn why he wants to die or whether he, in fact, succeeds in his quest, and the film's conclusion suggests that the whole affair has been staged as part of a movie anyway. Among its other qualities, *Taste of Cherry* forces the audience to interrogate conventional assumptions about death, life, and the ultimate meaning of living.

The Wind Will Carry Us (*Bad ma ra khahad bord*, 1999) pushes this interrogative process to another level—that of conventional cinema's narrative codes. In this film, a group of four professionals from Tehran visit a remote village in northern Kurdistan in search of something unspecified, which is never found. Instead, the film digresses into the small events of the villagers' everyday lives, filmed with a static camera, and finally goes nowhere in a narrative sense, making its audience keenly aware of the passive nature of spectatorship.

The terms that are generally used by Western critics to describe Kiarostami's cinema are "meditative," "serene," "hypnotic," and above all, "humanistic." Yet as Ali Mohammadi and Eric Egan have pointed out, it is humanism within an Islamic fundamentalist context, where God is the agency of all human action, and it is therefore a kind of revolutionary challenge to a

(right) *The Wind Will Carry Us* (*Bad ma ra khahad bord*; Abbas Kiarostami, 1999).

government whose legitimacy is grounded in Islamic principles—humanism as a form of political dissent. What is remarkable is the degree of latitude that Kiarostami has achieved for his art by bringing international prestige to his people, a process continuing through the journal documentaries *Ten* (2002), *Five* (2003), *10 on Ten* (2004), *Shirin* (2008), and *Certified Copy* (2010), set in Tuscany, and his first film to be shot and produced outside of Iran.

Practicing on the same plane as Kiarostomi, although less well known in the West, is the remarkably prolific Mohsen Makhmalbaf (b. 1957), who was once a member of an underground Islamist group and jailed for five years by the Pahlavi government, from 1974 to 1979. Released in the wake of the revolution, Makhmalbaf became a propagandist for the Islamist utopia promised by the new state. Between 1982 and 1985, which might be called his "Islamic period," Makhmalbaf contributed four films to the state-sponsored "Official Cinema" that directly advocated new government policies. Then he made a trilogy focusing on social problems, still working within an Islamic political framework but without specific reference to Islamist ideology, before he turned to several Kiarostami-like ruminations on film form and film ontology (although Makhmalbaf favors a rapid editing style, rather than the long take).

In the last few decades, Makhmalbaf—who has always written his own screenplays and often does his own cutting—began to formulate a theory of art and culture, still centering around film, in such self-reflexive works as *Gabbeh* (1996), whose title refers to a type of quilt-like carpet made by the Ghashgani tribe of southern Iran and whose rich tapestry of colors owes much to the work of Sergei Parajanov, especially *The Color of Pomegranates* (*Sayat-Nova*, 1969). Similarly, *A Moment of Innocence* (*Nun va goldun*, 1996), co-produced with France, presents a convoluted *Rashomon*-like narrative that has Makhmalbaf—as himself—directing a film about an event from his own earlier life as an Islamic revolutionary from the perspective of several different participants.

More recently, Makhmalbaf has been hailed for two other Iranian–French co-productions set in neighboring Islamic lands: civil war–torn Tadjikistan (*Silence* [*Sokhout*, 1997]) and Afghanistan (*Kandahar* [2001]). Makhmalbaf's daughter, Samira Makhmalbaf (b. 1980), is also a director of note, having produced *The Apple* (*Sib*, 1998) and *Blackboards* (*Takhte siah*, 2000), both simple stories about relationships between children and adults in postrevolutionary Iran. Her film *At Five in the Afternoon* (*Panj e asr*, 2003), about a young Afghan woman who attempts to break free of the Taliban by running for president, won the Jury Prize at Cannes and, like her other work, is reminiscent of Italian neorealism in form and theme.

Neorealism is frequently invoked to describe films of the new Iranian cinema—in part because the stories they tell (except in the self-consciously reflexive art cinema) tend to be deceptively simple and in part





(left) Maryam Mohamadamini in *A Moment of Innocence* (*Nun va goldun*; Mohsen Makhmalbaf, 1996).

because so many of them are shot on location out of doors. This is a function of their relatively low budgets, as well as of culturally specific factors, such as the rules of *hejab* (veiling and modesty), which require the wearing of *chadors* (overscarfs) and *burkas* (full-body overgarments) by female performers, coverings that make more "realistic" sense in scenes shot in public places. The fact that postrevolutionary Iranian cinema is ideologically based is another feature it shares with neorealism, and even though the ideologies are different, the end result is often the same—films that deal with the everyday lives of ordinary people and their attempts to create order and meaning in their world.

Finally, both cinemas emerged during the final stages of a devastating war—in Italy, of course, World War II; and in Iran, the Iran-Iraq War of 1980–1988, which produced heavy losses on both sides (600,000 Iranians died, and 400,000 Iraqis). Unlike neorealism, however, Iranian cinema must walk a tightrope between vital artistic/social expression and the moral demands of a fundamentalist Islamic state. Thirty percent of all Iranian films are government-made, another 35 percent are produced by the state-sponsored Farabi Foundation, and only 35 percent are privately funded, Cinema Minister Dad's liberalization efforts notwithstanding. This means that postrevolutionary Iranian film—which has been called "one of the most exciting in the world today"—still cannot show women with uncovered hair or women singing and dancing; neither can it in any way directly challenge the legitimacy of the Islamic republic or the rule of Muslim clerics.

Israel

The state of Israel (population 8 million) was not founded until 1948, but a Hebrew cinema had existed in Palestine at least since the silent documentaries of Yaakov Ben Dov (1882–1968). Trained as a professional photographer, Ben Dov brought motion-picture cameras to the Holy Land and formed his own production company in Jerusalem, First Palestinian Film Society (called "Menorah"), to make Zionist-oriented features about the British liberation of Palestine from the Turks, *Judea Liberated* (1917) and *The Land of Israel Liberated* (1919–1920), and the impact of the Balfour Declaration, *Return to Zion* (1920–1921) and *The New Jewish Palestine* (1921).

Later Ben Dov films concerned the Jewish settlement of Palestine (*Palestine Awakening*, 1923), the construction of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (*The Sons Build*, 1925), and Hebrew-language education (*Young Palestine*, 1926). His six-reel feature *Springtime in Palestine* (1928), which was edited and scored at the UFA studios in Berlin for distribution to fifty-six countries worldwide, was financed by the Palestine Foundation Fund (*Keren Hayesod*) and the Jewish National Fund to promote Zionist recruitment.

Ben Dov was succeeded by two other pioneering producers, Natan Axelrod and Baruch Agadati. Axelrod worked at the Moledet (Homeland) company, founded in 1927 at Tel Aviv to produce weekly Zionist newsreels, and in 1933, he produced the first silent Hebrew feature, *Oded the Wanderer* (*Oded Hanoded*, 1933; directed by Chaim Halachmi); he then established the Carmel Film Company, which produced weekly Zionist newsreels (*Yoman Carmel*) until well into the 1950s. Agadati turned out occasional newsreels (*Yoman Aga*) between 1931 and 1934, when he produced *This Is the Land* (*Zot hi ha'Aretz*), a semi-documentary history of Jewish settlement with recorded narration and dialogue.

At about the same time, the sound documentary *The Land of Promise* (Judah Leman, 1935), a propaganda epic lauding Zionist achievement in Palestine, was produced by the Palestine Foundation Fund, in collaboration with Louis De Rochemont, and distributed internationally in English, German, Hebrew, Yiddish, French, and Polish. Another notable Hebrew film made before 1948 was the sound feature *Sabra* (*Tzabar*, 1933), which depicts a struggle over water rights between Jewish immigrants and Arab villagers. Directed by the Polish filmmaker Aleksander Ford at the invitation of impresario Ze'ev Markovitz, *Sabra* was cut by British censors to remove its scenes of ethnic conflict and re-released as *The Pioneers* (*HeKhalutzim*); it was restored and shown intact for the first time at a film festival in Haifa in 1954.

After the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, two major studios were founded—Geva (1950) and Herzliya (1951)—mainly for the production of documentaries and information films by the government. To this point, the country's industry had been documentary-based, but from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s, partly as an attempt to move in a more feature-oriented direction, many documentaries acquired plots and characters. In 1954, the Knesset passed the Encouragement of Israel Film Law, which provided financial aid in the form of tax subsidies to both foreign and domestic producers, resulting in many "heroic-nationalist" epics, such as *Hill 24 Doesn't Answer* (*Giv'a 24 eina ona*; Thorold



Jill Haworth in *Exodus* (Otto Preminger, 1960).

Dickinson, 1955) and *Pillar of Fire* (*Amud haEsh*; Larry Frisch, 1959), all of them about crucial Arab-Israeli conflicts in Zionist history.

These and such Hollywood-originated productions as *The Juggler* (Edward Dmytryk, 1953), *Exodus* (Otto Preminger, 1960), *Judith* (Daniel Mann, 1965), and *Cast a Giant Shadow* (Melville Shavelson, 1966) gave local filmmakers valuable technical experience, but it really wasn't until the wave of prosperity that followed the 1967 Arab-Israeli war that sufficient money, talent, and equipment came together to found a viable national industry centered in Tel Aviv. Israeli television was inaugurated at that time (1968), providing work for filmmakers at all levels, and in 1969, the government established the Israeli Film Center to attract foreign investment. By the early 1970s, annual production had reached twenty features, quadrupling the rate of the previous decade.

It was in this context that producer-director Menahem Golan (1929–2014) joined forces with his cousin Yoram Globus (b. 1941) to form the fantastically successful Golan-Globus Productions, whose combination of low-budget local films and international co-productions enabled it to acquire New York–based Cannon Films in 1979 and become a major force in the industry for the next ten years. The 1970s also

witnessed the rise of the *bourekas* films as the dominant genre within the Israeli industry, many of which were produced by Golan-Globus. Named for a type of Near Eastern pastry, these extremely popular films were ethnic comedies and melodramas about Israel's central social problem—the tensions between the lower-class Mizrakhi (native Sephardic Jews and those who had immigrated from Arab countries during the 1950s) and the middle-class Ashkenazi (educated Central and Eastern European Jews, many of them Holocaust survivors, who had become the nation's leadership class).

Initiated in the 1960s by Ephraim Kishon (*Sallah Shabati*, 1964) and Menahem Golan (*Fortuna*, 1966), the *bourekas* became a mainstream genre during the 1970s in the work of Boaz Davidson—*Charlie and a Half* (*Charlie veKhetzi*, 1974), *Billiards* (*Snuker*, 1975), *Tzan'ani Family* (*Mishpakhat Tzan'ani*, 1976)—who coined the term. Davidson also turned the genre toward a youth-oriented, soft-core market with the Golan-produced *Lemon Popsicle* (*Eskimo limon*, 1978), which adapted the *bourekas* formula to the erotic adventures of high-school students à la George Lucas's *American Graffiti* (1973) and inspired many successful sequels.

The 1970s also saw the establishment of the first Israeli film schools, the Israel Film Institute, and a number of municipal cinematheques, but the government was concerned about the increasing commercialization of the industry and in 1979 created the Fund for the Promotion of Quality Films to help finance independent projects, such as those favored by "Kayitz," the transliterated acronym for "Young Israeli Cinema." This movement produced low-budget, open-ended films focusing on the psychological situations of individuals within the larger society. During the 1980s, many Kayitz directors turned to political themes, especially after Israel's 1982 incursion into Lebanon, often focusing on the Palestinian dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In such "Palestinian Wave" films as Daniel Wachsmann's *Hamsin* (1982), Uri Barbash's *Beyond the Walls* (1983), and Shimon Dotan's *The Smile of the Lamb* (*Khiukh haGdi*, 1986), the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is treated ambivalently and Palestinians are sympathetically portrayed.

During the 1990s, Israeli cinema experienced an economic crisis resulting from high inflation and its small domestic market (203 theaters; 11 million tickets sold, only 10 percent for Israeli films). Production slumped to a record low of five features in 1991, but financial aid from the Fund for the Promotion of Quality Israeli Films helped it return to normal levels by mid-decade. In the late 1990s, government film subsidies were cut in half, but the parliament passed a



Anat Atzmon and Jonathan Sagall in *Lemon Popsicle* (*Eskimo limon*; Boaz Davidson, 1978).

Cinema Law in 2000, whereby half of the taxes levied on all commercial broadcasters in the nation would be allocated to underwriting the cinema, both as production capital and as subsidies for archives, festivals, and film schools. As the closest ally of the United States in the Middle East, Israel has a special relationship with Hollywood. In addition to widespread American distribution, Israeli cinema receives the support of American film personalities such as Goldie Hawn, who helped build the Tel Aviv Cinematheque in 1989, and Steven Spielberg, who funded the Jewish Film Archive (now named The Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive) at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, in 1987.

The Pacific Rim

Third World cinemas of the Pacific Rim are those of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, North and South Korea, and the Philippines. The Thai industry is star- and genre-based and, until the late 1970s, produced nearly 200 films a year for its proportionately large population (currently 67 million). In the 1980s, however, television, video, and American imports drained off the domestic audience, and for the last two decades of the twentieth century, Thai production shrank to twelve films annually. Even so, the work of a handful of serious directors shone through. Despite the Southeast Asian currency crisis (which actually began with the collapse of several Thai banks), Thai cinema began to rebound in the late 1990s, thanks to the phenomenal success of

a handful of films by Nonzee Nimibutr (b. 1962), a former director of television commercials—especially his splashy retelling of a traditional Thai ghost story, *Nang Nak* (*Mrs. Nak*, 1999).

In 2001, Prince Chatrichalerm Yukol's hundred-and-ninety-minute historical spectacle *The Legend of Suriyothai*, the story of a sixteenth-century queen who fought at her husband's side to repel a Burmese invasion, also achieved local blockbuster status. Thai films even began to appear at international festivals—for example, Wisit Sasanatieng's *Tears of the Black Tiger* (*Fa talai jone*, 2000), a parody of low-budget "Thai Westerns" from the 1950s and the 1960s; and Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Blissfully Yours* (2002) and *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, which won the Palme d'Or at the 2010 Cannes. Nevertheless, as in the other nations of Southeast Asia, "globalization" has meant the domination of Hollywood films at the box office, where they account for about 80 percent of annual revenue.

With a population of 255 million, 11.4 million living in Jakarta alone, Indonesia produced about seventy features per year until the mid-1990s, most of them imitations of American action films. As in Thailand, there are a handful of serious directors. In 1997 and 1998, Indonesia was hit with simultaneous political and economic crises. Amid charges of massive corruption, President Suharto ended his thirty-two-year regime by resigning in May 1998, and he was provisionally replaced by his vice president, Jusuf Habibie; at the same time, the Southeast Asian monetary crisis, begun in Thailand in mid-1997, hit the Indonesian economy hard, producing widespread social unrest.

Film production, which had already leveled off to about thirty features annually, dropped even further as producers found themselves unable to raise production capital or even pay laboratories for film processing and printing. It took Slamet Rahardjo (b. 1949), a veteran director, three years to produce *Telegram* (2000), even though it was based on a popular Indonesian novel and co-produced with a French company that provided 30 percent of its $500,000 budget. Yet the new government attempted to help the film industry by revoking the tax on domestic box-office receipts and rescinding the previous policy of script censorship, and annual production has begun to creep gradually upward again from its low point in 1998, when only eight Indonesian features were made.

A new generation of filmmakers has graduated from the Faculty of Film and Television (FFTV) of the Jakarta Institute of Arts (IKJ)—Indonesia's only film school—and started to work in the industry, and several major works have appeared that reflect the new climate of reform by addressing formerly taboo



M. L. Piyapas Bhirombhakdi in *The Legend of Suriyothai* (Chatrichalerm Yukol, 2001).



Anwar Congo and Herman Koto in *The Act of Killing* (*Jagal*; Joshua Oppenheimer, 2012); former death squad leaders live out their musical fantasies.

political and social issues. Furthermore, new women directors are exploring themes such as mother-daughter relationships (Nan T. Achnas's *Whispering Sands* [*Pasir berbisik*, 2001]) and interracial marriage (Nia Di Nata's *Woman* [*Ca-bau-kan*, 2001]) for the first time in Indonesian cinema. An award-winning foreign-produced documentary, *The Act of Killing* (*Jagal*, 2012), was shot on location in Indonesia between 2005 and 2011; it concerns the anticommunist purge of 1965–1966, in which more than 500,000 perished in what a CIA report called "one of the worst mass murders of the 20th century." Its sequel, *The Look of Silence* (2015), shows the agony borne by the victims' kin.

Malaysian cinema, which inherited an old-style studio system from the 1930s, was virtually monopolized by Shaw Brothers until the National Film Development Corporation Malaysia (FINAS) was established in 1981 to upgrade the aesthetic quality of domestic cinema and film culture generally among its population of 30.7 million. Since that time, a number of young independent directors have emerged. In the 1990s, the Malaysian government began to promote the concept of a Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) that would spread southward from the capital of Kuala Lumpur, covering an area of 270 square miles, and become the keystone in its bid to turn the nation into the Silicon Valley of Southeast Asia by 2020. Included in the plan was the construction of a $60 million high-tech Entertainment Village (E-Village) in the new government headquarters at Cyberjaya, with studios for digital production, a color-processing laboratory, and a theme park. A new digital postproduction facility was also planned for the MSC as a joint venture of Malaysia and Hollywood. As in Indonesia, the monetary crisis that swept Southeast Asia in mid-1997 had devastating short-term effects on the Malaysian economy, with the cost of goods and services rising by 50 percent, and the entertainment industry was among the hardest hit—for example, all but two films released in 1998 lost money.

Yet by 2000, the Central Bank of Malaysia predicted an economic growth rate of 5 percent, and there was an attendant growth in film production. Furthermore, to stimulate the industry, the government Information Ministry provided a $26.3 million grant to fund up to twelve films annually at the rate of $500,000 each, to be administered by the FINAS. At the end of 2000, more than a hundred international companies had joined the MSC venture, including Microsoft and Siemens AG, and it promised a state-of-the-art environment for the development and production of multimedia products.

The first phase of the E-Village at Cyberjaya, the "Studio Precinct," was completed in 2001; it contains eight digitally equipped soundstages, one of which, at nine stories, is the tallest in world—linking it iconically to the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur, which is the world's tallest building. One of the Malaysian

film industry's goals is to attract foreign production to its new facilities, as it did near the turn of the century with Fox's *Entrapment* (Jon Amiel, 1999) and *Anna and the King* (Andy Tennant, 1999). Another is to gear up its own production engines, at which it has been very successful: from only seven films in 1999, annual production rose to twenty-six in 2009 and continues at approximately that level today. (About half of Malaysian films are made in English.)

The film industry of South Korea (Republic of Korea, population 51.3 million) currently produces about 100 features per year, dominates its domestic market, and has a history going back to the 1920s, much of it quite distinguished, if little known outside the country. During the 1960s, in fact, South Korea became one of the largest film producers in the world, averaging 200 annually for much of the decade, but it experienced a severe slump following the mass diffusion of television in 1969. By the late 1970s, Korean films had begun to appear on the international festival circuit, and in the 1980s, despite some of the strictest censorship laws in any noncommunist nation, a so-called cinema of quality emerged that featured subject matter from the country's ancient mystic culture and some of the best cinematography and lighting available in Asia. Until recently, Korean cinema was all but ignored in the West, due in large part to its inaccessibility. Korea was liberated from the Japanese on August 16, 1945, but there immediately followed an American military occupation of the southern part of the peninsula and a Soviet occupation of the north above the 38th parallel.

South Korea was proclaimed the Republic of Korea in 1948, with its capital at Seoul. A communist government was established in North Korea, styled the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, with its capital at Pyongyang. When North Korea invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950, a civil war ensued that became the Korean War when UN forces led by the United States intervened on the side of South Korea and Communist China supported the North. The war ended in a stalemate three years later, leaving 3 million dead on both sides. The North has remained in Communist hands ever since, while the South experienced a succession of harsh military dictatorships from 1961 to 1992, tacitly



sanctioned by the continuing presence of about 30,000 combat-ready American troops (who are still in place as of 2015).

The film industry of South Korea, which had traditionally been located in the Ch'ungmuro district of Seoul, moved to the port city of Pusan during the war (as did the seat of government itself). It returned to Ch'ungmuro after 1953 to find its equipment and facilities wrecked by the war, but the government of the first Korean president, Syngman Rhee, attempted to stimulate the industry at that time by exempting it from taxes. This policy worked effectively to increase production year by year, and by the end of the decade, annual production was approaching 100 films. Yet these were tightly controlled by government censorship. When student protests forced the resignation of Rhee in 1960, there was a brief period of artistic freedom, but censorship was reimposed in the wake of a coup d'état that toppled the civilian government in 1961 and put General Park Chung Hee in power as president.

During the 1960s and the 1970s, films were subject to pre-censorship by the aggressively anticommunist military authorities, but they were also produced in great numbers. From 1968 to 1971, the industry made more than 200 features per year, with a high of 229 in 1969, for both domestic and large export markets, mainly in Hong Kong. In 1973, the Park government promulgated a new Motion Picture Law that institutionalized a licensing system based on two separate censorship reviews, one before production and the other before release, to ensure that films adhered closely to the state ideology of economic Darwinism and anticommunism. (The Korean Motion Picture Promotion Corporation [KMPC] was formed at the same time to shore up the production sector; it remained a major force in the industry until it was replaced in 1999 by the Korean Film Commission [KOFIC].) Quotas were set on foreign imports, but the rigidity of the censorship process forced all but the largest production companies out of business and drove down the annual output to 101 films by 1977. Aggravating this general industry decline was the shrinkage of the national audience due to competing forms of entertainment, especially television: from about 170 million during the 1960s, the film audience shrank to 44 million in 1981.

On October 26, 1979, President Park was assassinated by his own CIA chief, and General Chun Doo Hwan staged a military coup shortly thereafter. Chun's administration sought international recognition for the Korean film industry as a way of building the nation's image abroad. It encouraged the subtitling of prints for submission to foreign festivals, underwrote directors' travel to those events, and provided cash incentives for filmmakers receiving international awards.

The results were impressive: during the 1980s, South Korean films picked up awards at Venice, Moscow, Montreal, Locarno, Tokyo, and Berlin. South Korea needed the help because, with the Cold War winding down, the United States terminated South Korea's status as a "most favored nation," and in 1988, Hollywood began to flood South Korea's domestic market with American product. In that same year, Chun was replaced by his chosen successor, General Roh Tae Woo, who accelerated South Korea's now expansive economic growth and established diplomatic relations for the first time with communist nations such as the USSR and China. His successes led directly to South Korea's successful hosting of the 1988 Olympic Games and the election in 1992 of its first twentieth-century civilian government, that of President Kim Young Sam (1992–1996), which was followed by that of presidents Kim Dae Jung (1997–2007), Lee Myung-bak (2007–2012), and Park Geun-hye (elected in 2012).

Although censorship was lifted from most other media in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, it took another five years for the Supreme Court of South Korea to rule that motion-picture censorship was unconstitutional (in 1996). Still, there was a relaxation of film oversight during the 1980s, and the new South Korean constitution of February 1988 specified "the right to artistic freedom" for all citizens.

It was during the liberalizing 1980s that the phenomenon now known as "New Korean Cinema" or the Korean New Wave was born. For the first time since the 1950s, filmmakers were able to choose their own subjects, and there was a new realism with regard to contemporary social issues. A similar movement had arisen during the 1970s, when a group of directors led by Yi Chang Ho and calling themselves *yongsang sedae* ("the image generation") had attempted to incorporate European art-film techniques into their work, but it was suppressed and Yi was forced into retirement. The new movement combined art-film aesthetics with social commitment, in films that ultimately examined what it meant to be Korean. By and large, these first New Wave filmmakers were oblique in their critique of Korean society and avoided making films that were directly and obviously political.

In the 1990s, however, the gloves came off, and two figures in particular stood out for their caustic view

(left) Chow Yun-Fat and Jodie Foster in *Anna and the King* (Andy Tennant, 1999), shot in Malaysia.

of recent Korean history: Jang Sun-Woo (b. 1952) and Park Kwang-su (b. 1955). Jang is known for a combination of political engagement and stylistic experiment that has brought comparison with Ozu and Godard. His most characteristic work is *A Petal* (*Kotyip*, 1996), which combines documentary and staged footage to tell the story of a traumatized survivor of the notorious Kwangju massacre of 1980, in which hundreds of antigovernment protestors were slaughtered by army troops at the order of President Chun Doo Hwan, who was later sentenced to death for the crime.

Jang experimented with this docudrama form in other films, including *Bad Movie* (*Napun Yeunghwa*, 1997), a *cinéma vérité*–style account of Seoul street kids, featuring drug abuse and prostitution, that mixes 35mm with digital video; and the controversial *Lies* (*Gojitmal*, 1999), an adaptation of a famous banned novel by Jang Jung-Il, about an obsessive sadomasochistic relationship between a middle-aged sculptor and a teenage girl. Park began by making slice-of-life social comedies but graduated to more serious themes in *To the Starry Island* (*Geu seome gago shibda*, 1993), which makes a case for Korean reunification in a story of repressed hostilities from the nation's war-torn past returning to poison social relationships in the present on a small island.

In *A Single Spark* (*Jeon tae-il*, 1996), Park used documentary-like footage to tell the story of a 1970s student radical (Jeon) whose self-immolation in protest of brutal factory conditions catalyzed the Korean labor movement. Hong Sang-soo's (b. 1960) *The Day a Pig Fell into the Well* (*Daijiga Umule Pajinnal*, 1996) is a dark, picaresque comedy of contemporary urban morals, implicitly critical of Korea's nascent consumerism—a theme it shares with Park Chul-Soo's horror film *301/302* (1995), though the subject of the latter is cannibalism and the former is adultery.

Support from the Korean Film Commission, combined with rapidly accelerating foreign sales (to both Southeast Asia and, increasingly, Europe) and a strong local market (with an average 65 percent share for domestic product), has made the South Korean film industry one of the world's strongest—as confirmed by the performance of record-setting national blockbusters such as Kang Je-gyu's espionage thriller *Shiri* (1999) and Park Chan-wook's *Joint Security Area* (*Gongdong gyeongbi guyeok JSA*, 2000), an action-oriented mystery about the murder of two North Korean soldiers on the DMZ.

Participating in the New Korean Cinema, but not *of* it, is Im Kwon-taek (b. 1936), South Korea's only world-class director. With more than a hundred titles to his credit, Im has participated actively in every stage of post–World War II Korean cinema and is in many ways its most paradigmatic figure. He began working in the industry as an assistant director in the late 1950s.

His international breakthrough came with *Mandala* (1981), which won the Grand Prix at the Hawaii Film Festival and was invited to compete at Berlin. This film, about the crisis of faith of a Buddhist monk, was constructed of beautifully composed long takes and has been compared to the best work of Tarkovsky and Angelopoulos, although it is also steeped in Korean traditional culture. After it was discovered by the West, Im's work became increasingly intense and increasingly honored. His art-film image notwithstanding, Im continued to direct occasional mass-market genre films—for example, the violent period gangster melodramas *Son of the General* (*Chang-gun ui Adeul*, 1990) and its two sequels.

In addition to this successful franchise, Im broke South Korean box-office records in 1993 with *Sopyonje*, a melodramatic account of a traditional *p'ansori* singer who attempts to extend his art into the post–Korean War era, based on a best-selling novel by Lee Chung-Joon. With *The Taebaek Mountains* (*Taebaek Sanmaek*, 1995), adapted from an epic novel by Cho Jeong-lae, Im contributed to the new political discourse on modern Korean history with a nearly allegorical drama about the struggle to control a small southwestern village on the eve of the Korean War. More recently, Im contributed *Chunhyang* (2000) to the burgeoning cinematic literature on the thirteenth-century Chunhyang legend, subject of the first existing text of *p'ansori*. (There have been at least fifteen film versions to date, including the second Korean silent film and the first Korean talkie; see above.)

Im's film is framed by a *p'ansori* recital of the tale in a theater, so that the screen images are narrated by the chanting *p'ansori* artist, and shots of the *p'ansori* audience reacting to his performance are used to confirm our own responses to the film. *Chunhyang* is a remarkably effective experiment in translating a traditional performance art into the language of film, and the stunning color cinematography by Jung Il-sung makes it a feast for the eye, as well as the ear. Although he is frequently compared to Kenji Mizoguchi (for his use of the long take and his appropriation of abused women as vehicles for social criticism) and Abbas Kiarostami (for his sometimes self-reflexive humanism), the director whom Im Kwon-taek most resembles is probably

(right) Jeon Moo-song and Ahn Sung-hi in *Mandala* (Im Kwon-taek, 1981).





Lee Hyo-jeong in *Chunhyang* (Im Kwon-taek, 2000), which is narrated by a traditional *p'ansori* artist who chants, sings, and performs elements of the story before a live audience.

John Ford—a filmmaker who encapsulates an entire industrial system (the classical Hollywood cinema) and worked a lifetime within its fairly rigid confines, but who nevertheless managed to achieve a cinema of technical perfection, vision, and virtually religious grace.

North Korean film history began in 1945 when Kim Il Sung proclaimed the Democratic People's Republic. It initially concentrated on the production of documentaries and, especially during the Korean War of 1950–1953, propaganda. A feature cinema began to develop slowly during the 1960s and the 1970s, and in 1987, the first international North Korean film festival was held at Pyongyang, home of the state University of Cinematography since 1953. The most important directors practicing in North Korea (population 24.6 million) today are Rim Chang Bom (*Thaw* [*Pomnaiui nunsogi*, 1986]) and Yun Riyong Gyu (the widescreen historical epic *Talmae and Pomdari* [1987]). In 1986, the country's best-known director, Shin Sang-ok, and his actress wife, missing since the late 1970s, surfaced in Vienna and asked for U.S. political asylum. North Korea's main producer, the Korean Film Studio, claims to make about forty films per year, but the Pyongyang festivals reveal a scant number of features, suggesting that the total includes science and documentary shorts, cartoons, and state telefilm series.

The film industry of the Philippines (population 102 million) was large, exploitative, and studio-based until the 1960s. Most films at the time were shot in Tagalog (which helped consolidate it as the national language), and they tended to be cheap knockoffs of Hollywood and European genre product (e.g., bloody Tagalog Westerns in the Italian vein) or low-budget sex films called *bombas*. Characteristic of the Philippine industry in the 1960s and the 1970s was producer–director Eddie Romero (1924–2013), who incorporated Hemi-sphere Pictures to crank out B-grade action films (e.g., *The Raiders of Leyte Gulf*, 1963) and horror films (e.g., *The Mad Doctor of Blood Island*, 1969) for international release, mainly to American exploitation venues. Romero ultimately partnered with American International Pictures to produce such classic grindhouse fodder as *Big Doll House* (1971) and *Black Mama, White Mama* (1973), before turning to more serious films about modern Philippine history and society, such as *The Eagle* (*Aguila*, 1980) and *This Is the Way We Live* (*Ganito kami noon, paano rayo ngayon*, 1981).

Then the system began to collapse, and its leading stars established their own production companies, churning out a decade's worth of *bakya*, or films for low-brow tastes. During the 1970s, however, several

Philippine directors garnered international profiles and earned new respect for the domestic industry, most prominently, Lino Brocka (1940–1991), whose *Manila in the Claws of Neon Signs* (*Maynila samga kuko ng liwanag*, 1975) is thought to be the most important Filipino film of the decade.

Brocka's success started a Philippine new wave, in which the collaboration of stylistically experimental directors with adventurous young writers produced such work as the French-trained Ishmael Bernal's *Speck in the Water* (*Nunal sa tubig*, 1976) and Mike De Leon's *Itim* (1976). When Brocka's *Jaguar* (1980) became the first Filipino film ever to compete at Cannes, and Bernal's *City after Dark* (1980), the first Filipino film to succeed in the international marketplace, then first lady Imelda Marcos organized the Manila International Film Festival, which ran for two years, in 1982 and 1983. In that short period, the Philippine new wave gained an international reputation in the continuing work of Brocka, *Lamentations* (*Dung-aw*, 1981), *Macho Dancer* (1988), and *Les insoumis* (*Fight for Us*, 1989); Bernal, *Himala* (1983) and *Affair* (*Relasyon*, 1985); De Leon, *In the Twinkling of an Eye* (*Kisapmata*, 1981) and *Batch '81* (1982); a newly respectable Eddie Romero; as well as the work of such relative newcomers as Kidlat Tahimik, *The Perfumed Nightmare* (1979) and *Turumba* (1983).

During the 1980s, the Philippines ranked among the top ten filmmaking nations in the world, with three large companies (Seiko, Regal, and Viva) and a handful of smaller ones producing approximately 150 features per year. President Ferdinand Marcos was overthrown in February 1986; the new government of Corazon Aquino chose to retain Marcos's strict policies of censorship without adopting his enthusiasm for the arts, and the "New Filipino Cinema" languished. When Lino Brocka was killed in an automobile crash in 1991, Philippine cinema lost its leading director and its most eloquent social critic. Under the regime of President Fidel V. Ramos, an Aquino protégé elected in 1992, the industry returned to the production of low-budget popular entertainment at the rate of about 130 features annually, rising as high as 204 in 1997.

Remarkably, perhaps, film culture is deeply ingrained in Philippine society and politics. Movie stars have for many years occupied top political posts, and in 1997, the popular movie actor Joseph Estrada was elected president. During his short term in office, Estrada encouraged the flowering of a creative and experimental cinema by installing a liberal political ally at the head of the censorious Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB).



Coco Martin in *Kinatay* (*Butchered*; Brillante Mendoza, 2009).

When Estrada was ousted in the wake of a corruption scandal in 2000, he was replaced by Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, herself the daughter of a past president. She supported the industry through tax relief but was conservative in terms of film content, cracking down on works such as Jose Javier Reyes's controversial *Live Show* (2001). This *cinéma vérité*–style film about impoverished men and women in Manila who perform live sex acts for pay was a critique of both Philippine society and the preponderance of *bombas* in Philippine cinema, which remained in the early years of the twenty-first century an industry fundamentally devoted to exploitation and pulp fiction.

The mid-2000s, however, witnessed a rebirth of Philippine cinema through digital media. Although independent Philippine digital films are shot quickly on low budgets, they have made a strong showing at international film festivals such as Berlin, Vienna, and Venice; and in 2009, Brillante Mendoza won Best Director at Cannes for *Kinatay* (*Butchered*), a crime thriller about police brutality. Meanwhile, Philippine cinema experienced a renaissance at the box office in 2011, with three of its films becoming the highest-grossing domestic productions of all time: *The Unkabogable Praybeyt Benjamin* (Wenn V. Deramas), *No Other Woman* (Ruel S. Bayni), and *Enteng Ng Ina Mo* (Tony Y. Reyes). Their box-office success was exceeded by *Sisterakas* (Wenn V. Deramas) in 2012, and *It Takes a Man and a Woman* (Cathy Garcia-Molina) in 2013. At about the same time, Lav Diaz's *From What Is Before* (*Mula sa Kung Ano ang Noon,* 2014) won the prestigious Golden Leopard at the Locarno International Film Festival.



Kris Kristofferson in *Heaven's Gate* (Michael Cimino, 1980).



20

Hollywood, 1965–1995

In the 1960s, for the first time in its history, Hollywood fell behind the rest of the world—aesthetically, commercially, and even technologically, the latter due to the conservatism of its unions. Its decline resulted from the American industry's obstinate refusal to face a single fact: that the composition of the weekly American film audience was changing as rapidly as the culture itself. Between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s, that audience shifted from a predominantly middle-aged, modestly educated, middle- to lower-class group to a younger, better-educated, more affluent, and predominantly middle-class group.

The new audience in America, as all over the world, was formed by the postwar generation's coming of age. It was smaller than the previous audience, and its values were different. By the early 1960s, the old audience had begun to stay home and watch television, venturing out occasionally for some spectacular family entertainment but generally staying away from movie theaters. As the size of audiences decreased, admission prices rose well above the rate of general inflation, which had the effect of further decreasing the demand for the traditional Hollywood product. Yet the industry continued to make films according to the stylistic conventions of the 1940s and the 1950s, as if its old constituency still existed, when only vestiges of it actually did.

The principal change in filmmaking during this period was the cost of production, which by 1966 averaged $3 million per film due to both monetary inflation and the industry's own



Barbra Streisand in *Hello, Dolly!* (Gene Kelly, 1969); one of the many late-1960s flops produced by the majors.

extravagant search for a winning box-office formula. The new audience was not interested in seeing these films any more than was the old one, because as long as American cinema simply duplicated the popular entertainment function of television on a larger scale, neither audience particularly needed it. By 1962, Hollywood's yearly box-office receipts had fallen to their lowest level in history: $900 million, or one-half of the immediate postwar figure. The studios were in serious financial trouble, which grew worse as they made increasingly desperate attempts to recapture the old audience with spectacular flops such as 20th Century–Fox's *Cleopatra* (1963).

In 1965, the unprecedented success of Fox's *The Sound of Music*, which grossed more than $135 million nationwide, rekindled false hope in the spectacle formula, but a succession of stunning failures, such as 20th Century–Fox's *Doctor Dolittle* (Richard Fleischer, 1967), *Star!* (Robert Wise, 1968), *Hello, Dolly!* (Gene Kelly, 1969), and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (Richard Fleischer, Toshio Masuda, and Kinji Fukasaku, 1970), along with Paramount's *Paint Your Wagon* (Joshua Logan, 1969), *Darling Lili* (Blake Edwards, 1970), and *The Molly Maguires* (Martin Ritt, 1970), pushed the industry to the brink of catastrophe by the early 1970s.

As Hollywood's financial troubles worsened during the 1960s, several commercial forces coalesced to bring the new American audience into the theaters. For one thing, the French and Italian New Waves had demonstrated to producers all over the world that "art" films could make money—especially if they were shot rapidly on low budgets by young directors who were willing to work for less money than older, more established ones. This realization had two profound consequences for American cinema. In the first place, there was an increased tolerance for independent production of the type being practiced in Europe by Godard, Truffaut, Antonioni, Fellini, and others.

By the mid-1960s, independent producers such as Roger Corman of New World Films were able to sponsor young directors such as Francis Ford Coppola (b. 1939) and George Lucas (b. 1944), who were making their first features. Independent producer-directors, such as Stanley Kubrick (1928–1999) and Arthur Penn (1922–2010), found themselves for the first time able to control the financing of their own films and achieve an unprecedented degree of creative freedom. In the second place, the major studios, who were turning increasingly to television production to save themselves from financial ruin, became the willing distributors of these independent productions—something they never would have considered several years earlier—because distribution provided them with a badly needed source of revenue.

The majors also became large-scale domestic distributors of foreign films, whose circulation in the United States they had successfully managed to limit when they were powerful monopolies. By the mid-1960s, the work of Fellini, Antonioni, Bergman, and Buñuel, as well as that of French New Wave directors—which had previously been accessible in this country only in specialized "art houses" in major urban centers, if at all—suddenly began to appear regularly in first-run theaters all over America. By the 1970s, foreign films were as readily available as American ones, not just in cities but even in many small towns.

As the rigid structure of the studio system began to crumble, new talent entered the film industry in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, and between 1960 and 1966, a number of young directors from television began to make theatrical films. These included Irvin Kershner (1923–2010), John Frankenheimer (1930–2002), Sidney Lumet (1924–2011), Arthur Penn, and Sam Peckinpah (1925–1984). New cinematographers from the East Coast also entered the film industry, including Conrad Hall (1926–2003), Haskell Wexler (b. 1922), William Fraker (1923–2010), and the Hungarian émigrés László Kovács (1933–2007) and Vilmos Zsigmond (b. 1930). As these new filmmakers, working with ever-increasing creative freedom and mobility, assimilated the French and Italian innovations, a new kind of American cinema was born for a new American audience.

This audience was composed of the first generation in history who had grown up with the visually, if not intellectually, stimulating medium of television. Through hours of watching television as children and teenagers, its members knew the language of cinema implicitly, and when filmmakers such as Frankenheimer, Lumet, Penn, and Peckinpah began to move out of the studios in the mid- to late 1960s and employ the New Wave techniques of the French and Italian cinemas for the first time on the American screen, this young audience liked what it saw.

A phenomenal increase in the number and quality of college and university film study courses simultaneously enabled many members of the new audience to *understand* what they saw, as well as to enjoy it. It is important to realize that the values of the new audience, like its lifestyles, were radically different from those of the old. For better or worse, this audience had a generally permissive attitude toward such former cultural taboos as the explicit representation of sex, violence, and death.

Thus, when censorship was completely abolished and replaced by a ratings system in October 1968, the content of American cinema, as well as its form, was revolutionized to permit the depiction of virtually everything under the sun, including graphic sex and violent death. That this liberalization opened up mainstream cinema to exploitation is inarguable, but it was necessary before American film could achieve full maturity of content. It is difficult, for example, to imagine a director such as Robert Altman (*Nashville*, 1975; *Three Women*, 1977) working at his best during the 1970s in the moral climate that produced *The Sound of Music* in 1965.

The New American Cinema

The Impact of *Bonnie and Clyde*

A new American cinema and a new American film audience announced themselves emphatically with the release in 1967 of Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde*. This film, which was universally attacked by the critics when it opened in August, had by November become the most popular film of the year. It would subsequently receive ten Academy Award nominations and win two—Best Cinematography for Burnett Guffey and Best Supporting Actress for Estelle Parsons—as well as win the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Script (David Newman and Robert Benton), and be named the Best Film of 1967 by many of the critics who had originally panned it.

Most triumphant of all, perhaps, *Bonnie and Clyde* is the only film ever to have forced the public retraction of a critical opinion by *Time* magazine, which dismissed the film in a summer issue and, in its issue of December 8, 1967, ran a long cover story on its virtues. Indeed, the phenomenal success of *Bonnie and Clyde*


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(left) Michael J. Pollard and Faye Dunaway in *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967).

caused many retractions on the part of veteran film critics, who, on first viewing, had mistaken it for a conventional, if gratuitously bloody, gangster film. *Bonnie and Clyde* was in fact a sophisticated blend of comedy, violence, romance, and—symbolically, at least—politics that borrowed freely from the techniques of the French New Wave (it was originally to have been directed by Truffaut and then Godard) and that perfectly captured the rebellious spirit of the times.

Based on the real-life career of Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow, the film tells the story of two young and attractive small-time criminals (Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway) from the Midwest who, during the Depression, fall in love, go on a spree of robberies and killings, and become national folk heroes in the process. Their targets are not the common people, but the avaricious banks and the armies of police that protect them—in other words, "the system." Bonnie and Clyde were thus prototypes of the antiestablishment heroes who have come to dominate so many American films since, and they resonated perfectly with the revolutionary tenor of the late 1960s. ("They're young! They're in love! And they kill people!" the advertising copy proclaimed.) By midfilm the lovers are clearly doomed, but nothing could prepare audiences in 1967 for the brutal violence of the ending, in which Bonnie and Clyde are ambushed after a romantic interlude and their bodies ripped apart by machine-gun slugs in



A new aesthetic of violence: shots from the montage sequence that concludes *Bonnie and Clyde*. By intercutting footage of the death scene from several separate cameras equipped with different lenses and running at different speeds, Arthur Penn and his collaborators created an unprecedented (though now widely imitated) effect.

a protracted ballet of agony and death. Penn shot this conclusion with four cameras running at different speeds with different lenses, and intercut the footage into a complex montage sequence that gives the deaths a mythic, legendary quality: Bonnie and Clyde are not simply killed; they are destroyed.

Even today, the sequence has an almost unbearable intensity, because our dramatic identification with the characters is so complete. In the social climate of the times, however, the new American audience identified with Bonnie and Clyde less as dramatic characters than as types of romantic revolutionaries. And the tense, nervous texture of the film, with its unpredictable shifts in mood and its graphic, sensual depiction of violent death, was as revolutionary in 1967 as were its protagonists. The form of *Bonnie and Clyde* has been imitated so many times by multitudes of "criminal couple" and "road" pictures since 1967 that it is hard for contemporary audiences to comprehend the originality of the film when it was released. Yet in 1967, it was clearly subversive in both form and content, and the angry critical debate it caused in the United States was, in many ways, less about a pair of 1930s gangsters than about the morality of violent dissent against an oppressive social order.







2001: A Space Odyssey

Another film that caught the imagination of a generation in the late 1960s was Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Produced at a cost of $10.5 million over a period of two and a half years, *2001* offered a mythic vision of the relationship between humanity and technology at a time when that relationship had a crucial bearing on the future of American society and of the entire Western world. Like its Greek namesake, the film has an epic structure.

In Section I, we watch a tribe of prehistoric ape-men learn how to use bones as instruments of destruction (our first technology being weaponry, preceding even language), shortly after they have encountered an enormous monolithic slab in the middle of the desert. Later, one ape-man crushes the skull of a rival with a bone and tosses the weapon jubilantly into the air, where it rotates in slow motion until an associative cut transforms it into the axis of a gigantic space station (actually, a weapons platform) several million years later. In Section II, a shuttle is launched from this station carrying scientists who have discovered a similar monolith buried beneath the surface of the moon; it is emitting a radio signal in the direction of the planet Jupiter. Section III opens eighteen months later with a huge phallic spacecraft gliding toward Jupiter in empty space. Inside are a team of astronauts and a brand-new HAL 9000 talking computer, which guides the ship and controls all of its vital functions. The mission of this probe is unclear, but it is apparently to track the radio signal.

HAL, who seems more highly evolved in emotional terms than any of the humans, suffers a paranoid breakdown when he makes a miscalculation, and he sets about killing all his human shipmates in the belief that

(left) The famous bone-to-space-station match cut, compressing millennia of civilization in the blink of an eye in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968).



2001: A Space Odyssey (Stanley Kubrick, 1968).

they are botching the mission and intend to disconnect him. He succeeds in terminating the life functions of three hibernating astronauts and marooning another in deep space, but the lone human survivor destroys HAL as a thinking entity by disconnecting his memory bank, while HAL tries desperately to talk him out of it. As we witness the computer regress to its basic language programs and finally expire, we feel a disturbing sympathy for it—disturbing because we have been encouraged to feel so little for the coolly disaffected humans of this future world.

Alone aboard the drifting spacecraft now, the final astronaut is drawn toward Jupiter and, abandoning ship in a pod, he encounters a third monolith floating through space. Suddenly, he is sucked into another dimension, where he experiences a hallucinatory trip through time and space, in which all perceptual relationships are blurred. Arriving as an older man in a conventional, completely white bedroom suite furnished in Louis XVI style, the astronaut ages to decrepitude before our eyes and is reborn in the film's final frames as the luminous, embryonic Star-Child—a new order of intelligence, beyond ape, man, and machine—moving through space toward the earth from which it began its evolution millions of years earlier.

Enigmatic, mystical, and profoundly sensuous, *2001* resists concrete logical interpretation because in a real sense, its medium *is* its message. As Kubrick himself pointed out, the film is "essentially a nonverbal experience. . . . It attempts to communicate more to the subconscious and to the feelings than it does to the intellect." Indeed, less than half of the film contains dialogue; the rest alternates between a brilliantly scored combination of classical and avant-garde electronic music and the silence of deep space.

The film also broke new ground in photographic special effects (supervised by Douglas Trumbull and Con Pederson), particularly in the technique of **front projection**, which it is credited with perfecting. It was shot by Geoffrey Unsworth (1914–1978) in Super Panavision for presentation in Cinerama in both 35mm and 70mm formats. Immensely popular in 1968, the film has a large cult following even today and is constantly revived. It has been ranked by the critic Fred Silva with *The Birth of a Nation* and *Citizen Kane* as an American landmark film—that is, a film that describes "a critical, unsettled area of American life"—in this case, the emptiness of technology in the form of a film that is itself a technological wonderment. From any perspective, *2001* is that most rare of cinematic achievements: a big-budget, nonnarrative spectacle of enormous technical sophistication that nevertheless makes an original and personal artistic statement about the human condition.

The Wild Bunch: "Zapping the Cong"

The years 1968 and 1969, perhaps the darkest in American history since the Civil War, witnessed some of the most original American films since the late 1940s. Like *Bonnie and Clyde*, many of them were aimed at the new, youthful audience and were either covertly or overtly concerned with the political hysteria that had gripped the nation over the war in Vietnam. If *Bonnie and Clyde* was about the type of romantic rebel who would fight the military-industrial complex to end the war and usher in the greening of America, Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969) was about America's mercenary presence in Vietnam itself.

In this film, which opens with the bloody massacre of an entire Texas town in the course of a payroll robbery, a gang of aging outlaws led by Pike Bishop (William Holden) finds itself increasingly confined by the closing of the American frontier and, pursued by bounty hunters, crosses the border into Mexico in search of greener pastures. The year is 1914, and the Mexican Revolution is in full swing, but the members of the Wild Bunch aren't looking for a cause, only some action. (As one of them comments after they have crossed the Rio Grande, "Just more of Texas, as far as I'm concerned.") The group falls in with Mapache, a brutish general who is leading federal troops in the fight against Pancho Villa and the insurgents. Brilliantly played by the Mexican director Emilio Fernández, Mapache is a sadistic thug who murders and tortures indiscriminately. His military base in the village of Agua Verde is a corrupt, barely competent dictatorship, propped up by powerful foreign governments (in this case, Germany and her allies) and their sophisticated weapons technology. The Bunch agrees to rob an American munitions train near the border for Mapache, who then attempts to seize the arms without paying for them. The gang outwits him, but Mapache captures one of their number—a Mexican Indian who has collaborated with the rebels—and



The opening massacre in the town of Starbuck in *The Wild Bunch* (Sam Peckinpah, 1969).

tortures him to death before their eyes. In disgust, Pike and his men confront Mapache and kill him. The film ends in a sustained bloodbath, as the outlaws seize the *federales*' machine gun and blast Agua Verde to pieces, all of them dying in the process.

The spectacular massacres that open and close *The Wild Bunch* are filmed in the style of the final ambush of *Bonnie and Clyde*, with a variety of lenses and different cameras running at different speeds, usually decelerated to depict the moment of death. With the death scene from Penn's film, they are among the most complex, kinetic, and shocking montage sequences in postwar American cinema, and they are balletically choreographed in a manner reminiscent of the battle scenes from Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*.

The film is also a stunning piece of widescreen composition from beginning to end, skillfully photographed by Lucien Ballard (1908–1988) in Panavision. Nevertheless, critics of the period were outraged at the extent and ferocity of the bloodshed. The final massacre has about it a sort of mad, orgasmic ecstasy, as the slaughter grows more and more intense until it reaches Eisensteinian (or Buñuelian) proportions: we see more people die than could possibly fill the small village; we see the same people die over and over again. Furthermore, the victims of this "heroic" violence are principally civilians caught in the crossfire. Yet a year before the revelation of the My Lai massacre, the outraged critics could not know that they were watching a mythic allegory of American intervention in Vietnam.

As with *Bonnie and Clyde*, the violence of *The Wild Bunch* was revolutionary; it *was* excessive for its time—a thing difficult to see today, when slow-motion bloodletting has passed from innovation to convention to cliché. Nevertheless, Penn and Peckinpah were committed filmmakers during the time of the war. Similar to their counterparts in the film noir movement of the late 1940s, they were interested in exposing their audience to certain dark realities of contemporary American life that the audience had itself largely chosen to ignore.

It is true that their films introduced conventions for the depiction of violence and carnage that others exploited ad nauseam in the 1970s and beyond. Yet both directors insisted for the first time in American cinema that the human body is made of real flesh and blood; that arterial blood spurts, rather than drips demurely; that bullet wounds leave not trim little pinpricks but big, gaping holes; and, in general, that violence has painful, unpretty, humanly destructive consequences. By bringing American film closer to reality in its depiction of what high-powered modern weaponry can do to the human body, Penn and Peckinpah had overturned decades of polite filmic convention that the body has the resilience of rubber and that death is simply a state of terminal sleep. This was important new knowledge for the citizens of a nation whose government was waging a savage war of annihilation in Southeast Asia by remote control.

End of a Dream

In the years 1968 and 1969, the violence of American life erupted onto its screens. The veteran cinematographer Haskell Wexler's *Medium Cool* (1969) was literally *about* media representations of violence in an America divided against itself by the war. Its main character is an alienated news cameraman who learns in the course of the film how easily the "detachment" of the media blends into distortion. As if to comment on itself, *Medium Cool* was shot in *cinéma vérité* fashion, with a climax staged against the very real backdrop of the police riots at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

Easy Rider (Dennis Hopper, 1969) also dealt openly with the violence and paranoia of an ideologically divided nation, although, like other movies of the period, it was praised for its radical social perspective far beyond its value as a film. In it, two hippies score a big drug deal and set off from California to Florida on their motorcycles "in search of America"—but, as the ad copy reads, they "couldn't find it anywhere." Treated with unmitigated contempt because of their appearance everywhere they go, the bikers are finally gunned down on a southern highway by some angry rednecks. A modestly competent synthesis of *Bonnie and Clyde* and the grade-B biker film, scored with good contemporary rock, *Easy Rider* shrewdly exploited the paranoia of a generation that felt itself at war with a hostile and increasingly belligerent establishment, and it became the box-office phenomenon of the decade. Produced for $375,000, it grossed $50 million and convinced old-guard Hollywood that a vast new youth market was ready to be tapped.

This conviction led to a spate of low-budget "youth culture" movies about protest, drugs, and the generation gap. *Getting Straight* (Richard Rush, 1970), *The Strawberry Statement* (Stuart Hagmann, 1970), *Joe* (John G. Avildsen, 1970), and *Little Fauss and Big Halsey* (Sidney J. Furie, 1970) were probably the best of this type, while most were so bad they couldn't even be sold to television after their theatrical release. Perhaps the only youth-oriented dramatic feature of the era to achieve any real distinction—and this on a standard

production budget—was Arthur Penn's extraordinary *Alice's Restaurant* (1969), a nearly plotless film about the failed idealism of the protest movement. There was, however, a good deal of vitality in another form calculated to appeal exclusively to the youth market: the rock documentary. While films such as *Monterey Pop* (D. A. Pennebaker, 1969) and *Mad Dogs & Englishmen* (Pierre Adidge, 1971) did a fine job of re-creating the experience of a live rock concert for a movie audience, Michael Wadleigh's *Woodstock* (1970) and, especially, Albert and David Maysles's *Gimme Shelter* (1970) attempted to make serious statements about the nature of rock music by approaching their respective concerts as social metaphors.

The "youth-cult" bubble of 1969–1970 was soon to burst, as the youth movement itself became increasingly disoriented and confused, and Hollywood returned to more conventional modes of production. With so many important films, such as *Bonnie and Clyde*, *The Wild Bunch*, *2001*, and *Medium Cool*, clustered around the years 1967–1969, it had seemed for a time that America was headed for a major cinematic (and social) renaissance. Yet neither came to pass.

Significantly, not one of the directors mentioned previously, with the clear exception of Stanley Kubrick, made a film after 1969 that truly equaled in stature his contribution to the late-1960s groundswell. Arthur Penn's *Little Big Man* (1970), *Night Moves* (1975), *The Missouri Breaks* (1976), and *Four Friends* (1981) are all serious, intelligent, and cinematically sophisticated films, but they do not compare in originality and vitality with *Bonnie and Clyde*. Peckinpah's genius for depicting mass slaughter moved from self-plagiarism (*Straw Dogs*, 1971) to self-parody (*The Getaway*, 1972; *The Killer Elite*, 1975; and *Convoy*, 1978) in the 1970s, although he continued to make interesting films (*Junior Bonner*, 1972; *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*, 1973; *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*, 1974; *Cross of Iron*, 1977; and *The Osterman Weekend*, 1983) when he could find the work—until he died in 1984.

Even Kubrick, whose reputation as a major figure is assured, never produced a film to rival *2001* in historical



Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda in *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969).



Woodstock (Michael Wadleigh, 1970).

importance, although some critics feel that his lavish attempt to re-create the structures of the nineteenth-century novel in *Barry Lyndon* (1975; from the novel by Thackeray) comes close. His epic of domestic horror, *The Shining* (1980; adapted from Stephen King's novel), did little to alter the balance of critical opinion, although *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) is clearly the definitive statement of why we were in Vietnam, and his last film, *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), is a lasting testament to the inability of men and women to communicate at any level.

Haskell Wexler has worked mainly as a cinematographer since 1968, collaborating as director with Saul Landau on *Interview with President Allende* (1971) and *Report on Torture in Brazil* (1971) and with Emile de Antonio on *Underground* (1976), but finally returning to features with the hard-hitting *Latino* (1985), set in war-torn Nicaragua, and *Bus Rider's Union* (2000), a *cinéma vérité* documentary about the decline of Los Angeles's public-transit system.

Dennis Hopper (1936–2010), whose success as a filmmaker was purely circumstantial in the first place, completed six features as a director after *Easy Rider—The Last Movie* (1971), *Out of the Blue* (1980), *Colors* (1988), *Backtrack* (1989; re-released 1991), *The Hot Spot* (1990), and *Chasers* (1994)—but none approached the vitality of his first film, and he was best known as a character actor before his death in 2010.

There was clearly something about the political and intellectual ferment of the late 1960s that produced, however briefly, a period of great creativity in American cinema and contributed to sweeping away time-honored conventions of both form and content. It was comparable in kind, if not in degree, to the Czech renaissance that preceded the Soviet invasion of 1968. The hope of liberalization released a surge of creative energy, whose influence continued to be felt long after the hope was crushed.

Hollywood in the Seventies and the Eighties

Inflation and Conglomeration

The enormous popular success in 1970 of two conventional formula films, *Love Story* (Arthur Hiller) and *Airport* (George Seaton), restored Hollywood's faith in the big-budget, mass-appeal feature, and the 1970s witnessed an inflation in the production costs of American films unparalleled in the industry's history. It was a decade of ever-bigger hits, such as *The Poseidon Adventure* (Ronald Neame, 1972), *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972), *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973), *The Sting* (George Roy Hill, 1973), *The Towering Inferno* (John Guillermin, 1974), *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975), *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), *Saturday Night Fever* (John Badham, 1977), *Grease* (Randal Kleiser, 1978), and *Superman: The Movie* (Richard Donner, 1978); and ever-bigger flops, such as *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Norman Jewison, 1973), *Lucky Lady* (Stanley Donen, 1975), *The Hindenburg* (Robert Wise, 1975), *Gable and Lombard* (Sidney J. Furie, 1976), *Sorcerer* (William Friedkin, 1977), *The Wiz* (Sidney Lumet, 1978), and *1941* (Steven Spielberg, 1979).

Between 1972 and 1977, the average production budget (or "negative cost") for a single film increased by 178 percent, or nearly four times the general rate of inflation. By the end of 1979, average production costs were nearly double the 1977 figure, having reached the staggering sum of $8.9 million per feature. Profits rose accordingly only if the film was a huge success, so the financial risks of production were substantially multiplied. This caused a trend toward the production of fewer and fewer films with every year that passed until the end of the decade, plus a steady increase in the amount spent on advertising and marketing campaigns designed to ensure the films' success, with these expenditures often rising as high as twice the production costs.

By 1975, it was not unusual for a single production company such as Paramount or 20th Century–Fox to have all of its capital tied up in five or six films annually, every one a potential blockbuster with an average budget of $4 million to $7 million (compare this figure with MGM's average of forty-two features per year during the 1930s). In 1977, at least one company (Columbia) had all of its capital, reportedly $20 million, invested in a single film

(*Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, which cost another $9 million in leveraged funds to advertise), and production budgets of $15 million to $20 million became common in the 1980s. Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and Robert Wise's *Star Trek* (1979) topped the list at $40 million and $42 million, respectively. The combined production costs of *Superman: The Movie* (Richard Donner, 1978) and *Superman II* (Richard Lester, 1980) are estimated to have been more than $60 million. The profits reaped by a success such as *Jaws* or *Star Wars* could be immense, but a single big-budget flop could threaten the solvency of an entire studio.

This condition clearly inhibited the creative freedom of people working within the industry, especially since it became common practice for producers, directors, writers, and stars to receive a percentage of the net and/or gross profits of their films, as well as a smaller fixed salary, or fee-for-service. It also created a hit-or-miss mentality among film executives who, as Leo Janos writes, were "trapped between the need to reap huge, ever-increasing profits and the absence of any body of professional knowledge or skill that can guarantee a hit." In this volatile fiscal environment, it was almost impossible for a new writer or director to be given a chance to work on an even modestly expensive—$7 million to $10 million—film. The fact that in 1978 there were approximately 3,000 filmmakers competing to make about 70 major films provides an index of the limitations this situation placed on contemporary American cinema.

Exacerbating these constraints is the fact that during the financial and social turbulence of the 1960s, most of the established Hollywood studios allowed themselves to be absorbed by huge conglomerates. Universal was acquired in 1962 by Music Corporation of America (MCA Inc.); Paramount in 1966 by Gulf & Western Industries, whose holdings at the time included firms supplying natural resources, agricultural products, and financial services; and United Artists in 1967 by Transamerica Corporation. In 1969, Warner Bros. was reincorporated as Warner



Mark Hamill in *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977).



Melinda Dillon and Cary Guffey in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Steven Spielberg, 1977).

Communications Inc. (WCI) by the vastly diversified Kinney Services; and in 1970, MGM by the Las Vegas financier Kirk Kerkorian, who liquidated much of the studio's real estate at a huge profit, which he reinvested in resort hotels. (MGM reemerged as a major force in the motion-picture industry in 1981, when Kerkorian bought United Artists from Transamerica in the wake of the *Heaven's Gate* disaster, forming MGM/UA Entertainment in 1983.) For most of these conglomerates, film and television production initially accounted for only a small percentage of their annual revenues.

In 1977, for example, the entire "Leisure Time" division of Gulf & Western—which then owned several publishing companies and major sports franchises, in addition to Paramount—accounted for less than 11 percent of total corporate income. Yet as Anthony Hoffman, entertainment analyst for the investment firm of Bache Halsey Stuart Shields, remarked at the time, "One thing that is obvious about this industry, and what has attracted the conglomerates to it in the first place, is that if you take any recent four- or five-year period, and you match total investment in production costs with pre-tax profits, it is not unusual to come up with average rates of return of 40 to 50 percent. . . . No other industry has that rate of return, particularly one that has such a low asset base."

The upheavals and the mergers of the 1970s and the 1980s changed the American film industry in fundamental ways. From 1975 on, the majors began to curtail production, deliberately limiting the supply of motion pictures, and cast their fates with a handful of calculated blockbusters. They learned that a *Godfather* (1972), a *Jaws* (1975), or a *Star Wars* (1977)—with domestic rentals, that is, returns to distributors, of $86.3 million, $129.5 million, and $193.5 million, respectively—could carry a company for years; and marketing, a secondary consideration during the studio era when the majors controlled exhibition, became an essential component of the blockbuster strategy.

Average negative costs rose more than 500 percent during the 1970s, and by the end of the decade, it often cost more to sell a film than to produce it. No longer the primary suppliers of motion pictures, the majors became financiers and distributors of films produced by others through ad hoc, agent-packaged deals. By 1980, the majors once again dominated domestic and international markets, including the new medium of video and new "franchise" concepts such as *Star Wars*, *Superman*, and *Alien*, whose life could extend through multiple sequels and product licenses. (Home-video license fees, nonexistent in 1969, accounted for less than $9 million before the resolution of *Universal v. Sony/Betamax* in October 1979, but by 1985, the sale of movies on videocassette would be worth $4.55 billion, exclusive of rentals.) In fact, 1980—the watershed year of conglomeration—was the most lucrative year in industry history before 1987, and new producer-distributor organizations such as Orion (1978), The Ladd Company (1979), and TriStar (1982) sprang up on either side of it.

New Filmmakers of the Seventies and the Eighties

Some critics have claimed that far from declining in creativity during the 1970s, Hollywood actually experienced a creative renaissance during that decade, as a result of the many young directors then working in the industry who were professionally trained at American film schools. Most new directors of the 1960s—Arthur Penn, Sam Peckinpah, Irvin Kershner, John Frankenheimer, and Sidney Lumet—had been trained in the medium of television, and the modes of teleproduction that they knew best emphasized economy, flexibility, and speed. As with the *cinéastes* of the French New Wave, some of their best films bore the mark of spontaneous improvisation.

Many new directors of the 1970s and the 1980s, conversely, had studied film history, aesthetics, and production as formal academic subjects in university graduate-school programs. Francis Ford Coppola (b. 1939) and the screenwriter/director Paul Schrader (b. 1946) went to film school at UCLA; George Lucas (b. 1944) and the screenwriter/director John Milius (b. 1944) graduated from the University of Southern California; Martin Scorsese (b. 1942) and Brian De Palma (b. 1940) attended New York University; Steven Spielberg (b. 1946) studied film and dramatic arts at California State; others, such as Peter Bogdanovich (b. 1939) and William Friedkin (b. 1935), had been documentarists and critics before making their first features. This highly specialized training produced a generation of American filmmakers whose visual and technical sophistication was immense but whose films were sometimes so painstakingly calculated for effect as to lack spontaneity.

Coppola, for example, is unquestionably a major American filmmaker; the first two films in his epic trilogy of organized crime in the United States, *The Godfather* (1972) and *The Godfather, Part II* (1974), are among the most significant American films of the decade. Yet there is something about *The Conversation* (1974), like De Palma's *Blow Out* (1981), that makes it all too obviously a remake of Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966), in audio electronics terms. George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977) is important historically because of its unprecedented use of computer technology to generate special photographic and auditory effects, but it is also a film intensely manipulative of its audience's perception. There is no room for interpretation or speculation in *Star Wars*: everyone who sees it has more or less the same experience. The same might be said of Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), both technically polished, but so calculated in terms of effect that they have all the predictability of a McDonald's cheeseburger.

Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973) is a strikingly original independent feature, but *Taxi Driver* (1976) exploits the paranoid alienation it pretends to examine, and *New York, New York* (1977), a meticulously studied effort to re-create the musicals of the Big Band era, seems more like a scholarly article than a feature film. Finally, Brian De Palma, who directed some of the most stylish and effective horror thrillers of the period—*Sisters* (1973), *Phantom of the Paradise* (1974), *Obsession* (1975), *Carrie* (1976), and *The Fury* (1978)—admitted that he approached film from a scientific point of view and that he tended to equate filmmaking with "building machines."

All of these extremely talented film school–trained directors have produced works of distinction—some of near genius. Yet even in their best work, say, Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), Scorsese's *Raging Bull* (1980) and C*ape Fear* (1991), or De Palma's *Dressed to Kill* (1980) and *Scarface* (1993), there is at times an almost academic preoccupation with cinematic effect and audience response. Furthermore, the unevenness that has characterized their careers from the beginning continued into the 1990s, producing both respectable failures, such as Coppola's *The Godfather, Part III* (1990), and unmitigated disasters, such as De Palma's *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1990), as well as works of mind-numbing aesthetic refinement, such as Scorsese's *The Age of Innocence* (1993).

More recently, they have lapsed into repetition and self-parody. De Palma's *Snake Eyes* (1998) exists almost exclusively to display its ten-minute opening sequence shot, and *Mission to Mars* (2000) is a showcase of bravura special-effects shots without a coherent theme. Scorsese's *Casino* (1995) is an extension of *Goodfellas* (1990), and his *Bringing Out the Dead* (1999) is an unwatchable variant of *After Hours* (1985). After the terribly unfunny Robin Williams comedy *Jack* (1996), Coppola functioned mainly as an executive producer, whose only creative work was literally a rehash of his last important film, *Apocalypse Now Redux* (2001). (The recent work of Scosese is an exception, with *The Departed* [2006], *Hugo* [2011; 3-D], and *The Wolf of Wall Street* [2013] all showing evidence of increased vitality.) Their

(right) Marlon Brando in *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972).







Ben Kingsley and Liam Neeson in *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993).

attitude toward their profession was nicely described by Vincent Canby in the 1970s, when he wrote of "major contemporary American filmmakers who, more and more, tend to put films together with such deliberation you might think that instead of making movies they were building arks to save mankind."

The apotheosis of this phenomenon in the 1990s was clearly Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993), in which the technical brilliance wasted on sophomoric entertainments such as *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984) and *Hook* (1991) was finally turned to a truly serious purpose—but in a no less calculated manner than it was in his *Jurassic Park*, produced the same year. By focusing on the worst act of genocide in human history to date, Spielberg indemnified the appeal of his project in a thoroughly legitimate way, and its success brought him the cultural prestige that had eluded him for decades. Moreover, the universal accolades for his Holocaust epic effectively concealed the fact that since 1945, scores of less spectacular but no less serious films had been made on the subject in the United States, Europe, and the Soviet Union, creating the popular impression that *Schindler's List* had originated one of the cinema's most sober genres.

(left) Martin Sheen in *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979).

Spielberg's *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* (1997) and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) seemed to confirm his reputation for adolescent fantasy and adult sentimentality, respectively (although *Private Ryan* contained an astonishingly violent rendition of the Normandy beachhead landing, as powerful as the clearing of the Warsaw Ghetto sequence in *Schindler's List*). Yet *A.I.: Artificial Intelligence* (2001) and *Minority Report* (2002) were riskier ventures altogether—the former adapted from a screen treatment by Stanley Kubrick about a robot boy who acquires human feeling, and the latter adapted from a dystopian science-fiction thriller by Philip K. Dick, dealing with precognition and mind control in 2054. With *Munich* (2005), *The Adventures of Tintin* (2011; 3-D), and *Lincoln* (2012), however, Spielberg contributed mature masterworks worthy of his remarkable talent.



The "last supper" for Capt. "Painless" Waldowski, the dentist, in *M*A*S*H* (Robert Altman, 1970).

Perhaps the most important filmmaker working within the American commercial system during the 1970s—as his own producer, through Lion's Gate Films, from 1971 to 1981—was Robert Altman (1925–2006). Altman came to film from television, where he directed episodes of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Bonanza*, *Bus Stop*, and *Combat!*. His first major feature was *M*A*S*H* (1970), an iconoclastic comedy set in a mobile army surgical hospital during the Korean War, which became the basis for the popular television series. The film is characterized by a subversive combination of humor and gore, and it makes effective use of the wide-angle Panavision compositions and overlapping dialogue for which Altman became justly famous. While *M*A*S*H* had a tough, absurdist edge and set new standards for the melding of cruelty, violence, and humor, it never pretended to be more than a hip service comedy.

Brewster McCloud (1970), conversely, is a deliberate venture into social satire and was Altman's personal favorite among his films. It concerns a young man who is preparing for a bird flight in the Houston Astrodome under the tutelage of a bird-woman mentor named Louise. McCloud must avoid sex, which binds him to earth, and must kill a number of reactionary characters in order to realize his dream of total freedom through flight, an equation perfectly made by Altman through subjective aerial photography. Some critics thought the film eccentric nonsense, but Andrew Sarris was closer to the mark when he called it "the first American film to apply an appropriate tone and style to the absurdist follies of our times."

McCabe & Mrs. Miller (1971), Altman's next film, has become increasingly interesting in light of his later work. Beautifully photographed on location in British Columbia by Vilmos Zsigmond, who "flashed" the negative stock to give the film a tinted, old-fashioned look, it is about a small-time gambler and (by his own account) gunfighter near the turn of the century who founds the town of Presbyterian Church. With the aid

(right) Warren Beatty in *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (Robert Altman, 1971).

of an enterprising brothel madam, he helps the town grow and prosper until representatives of a large mining conglomerate approach him and attempt to buy him out. Always something of a buffoon beneath his self-confident exterior, McCabe actually believes in the free-enterprise system, and he refuses to sell his interest in the town. Naturally, agents are sent to kill him, and after a seriocomic gun battle, he is shot to death in the snow. The film ends with a slow zoom into the constricted pupil of Mrs. Miller as she lies in bed stoned on opium after the murder, suggesting an option that many Americans have chosen to avoid confronting the brutality of their economic system.

After *Images* (1972), an experimental feature that attempted rather unsuccessfully to probe the mind of a schizophrenic, Altman made his most cinematically elegant film, an updated version of Raymond Chandler's fifties detective novel *The Long Goodbye* (1973). Shot by Zsigmond on location in Los Angeles and Malibu, the film is less a detective story than a sardonic comment on contemporary American narcissism, drenched in the languid and decadent atmosphere of Southern California. Philip Marlowe, an unsuccessful private detective, helps a friend who is accused of murdering his wife and defends him staunchly, only to discover that the friend actually committed the crime and has used Marlowe shamelessly to avoid detection. Marlowe, whose throwaway line throughout the film has been "It's okay with me," is finally backed up against something that's not okay, not even in the modern Babylon of Los Angeles, and he tracks his friend to his hideaway in Mexico and shoots him. *The Long Goodbye* was Altman's most visually elaborate film before *3 Women* (1977), and it makes striking thematic use of Zsigmond's wide-angle and telephoto zoom shots.

Thieves Like Us (1974), Altman's entry in the *Bonnie and Clyde* category, is adapted from the same novel as Nicholas Ray's *They Live by Night* (1949). It deals with three prison escapees during the Depression who set out on a spree of bank robbing, become notorious, and are finally killed by the police. *California Split* (1974), Altman's first film to use the proprietary Lion's Gate eight-track wireless sound system, is an episodic story about compulsive gambling, set in Las Vegas, which, similar to *Thieves Like Us,* is ultimately about American





Keith Carradine in *Nashville* (Robert Altman, 1975).

rootlessness. Yet it was in *Nashville* (1975) that Altman made his most telling comment on the nature of American society.

Nearly three hours long and recorded in Lion's Gate eight-track stereo, with individually controlled wireless microphones on seven of the principal players, plus one track for background noise (all using the Dolby noise-reduction [NR] system), *Nashville* has no plot in the traditional sense. It concerns the lives of twenty-four separate characters in the five-day period preceding a rally to be given at the city's Parthenon for the "Replacement Party" presidential candidate, Hal Philip Walker (whose ironic campaign slogan is "New Roots for the Nation").

The characters all come from different walks of life, but they have one thing in common: all are seeking either to become or to remain celebrities in the world of country music and, by extension, of American mass-mediated culture at large. Their individual lives coalesce at the political rally that concludes the film, where a young assassin who has come there to kill Walker kills one of the celebrities instead. As Pauline Kael remarked, *Nashville* is "a country-and-Western musical; a documentary essay on Nashville and American life; a meditation on the love affair between performers and audiences; and an Altman party."

Yet *Nashville* is also a film about the ways in which entertainment media and national politics—all but indistinguishable from each other—work constantly to distract people from the massive inequalities of American society and the violence of its recent past. Altman finds many American virtues to admire, but the most important theme of *Nashville* is how quickly we forget and gloss over such things as the terrible public violence of the 1960s and the human consequences of the war in Vietnam. Its most urgent comment is that Americans, in their blind pursuit of success and their compulsive need for social change, are leading unexamined lives.

Nashville was Altman's bicentennial birthday present to the United States. Such was the high-risk mentality of Hollywood in the 1970s that although the film returned

(right) Shelley Duvall and Janice Rule in *3 Women* (Robert Altman, 1977).



$9.3 million, it nonetheless was deemed a commercial failure. Yet Altman continued to produce original and sophisticated films. *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* (1976) is, like *Nashville*, an attack on the hypocrisy and exploitation of American "show biz," as reflected in the way in which the title character sustains his own popular myth in his dealings with Chief Sitting Bull. From this completely plotless film, Altman moved confidently into the realm of dreams with *3 Women* (1977), which deals with the nature of the female psyche in surrealistic terms. The film begins as a social satire with a strong subtext of mythic imagery and becomes progressively more allusive and mysterious, until it transforms itself completely in the concluding sequences, which are surely among the most unusual in contemporary American cinema. From the irreverent humor of *M*A*S*H* to the film dreaming of *3 Women*, Robert Altman proved himself to be one of the most innovative American filmmakers of the 1970s. Critically admired, Altman's 1980s films lost touch with the mass audience, but in 1992, he returned to mainstream box-office success quite unexpectedly with *The Player*. Scripted by Michael Tolkin from his own novel, this dark satire of contemporary Hollywood concerns a studio executive who murders a writer and gets away with it—a paradigm for the workings of the studio system ad infinitum. The film is a directorial tour de force, crammed full of hilarious star cameos and inside jokes, but it succeeds mainly in Altman's exquisitely precise sense of the moral corruption at the film industry's core.

Short Cuts (1993) extends the metaphor to Southern California (and, by extension, to the nation) at large. Adapted by Altman from the short stories of Raymond Carver, it is a sort of *Nashville* for the 1990s—a hundred-and-eighty-nine-minute mosaic of critical moments in the lives of six Los Angeles couples and assorted others, culminating in an earthquake (a "typical" American catastrophe, like the earlier film's political assassination). Altman charts the intersecting courses of these multiple characters—all of whom are alternately venal, predatory, weak, irresponsible, and entirely human—to create a panorama of life in the 1990s. *Gosford Park* (2001) demonstrated Altman's amazing resilience in an elegant and witty murder mystery that dissects the British class system, circa 1932. With equal devotion to period detail, astute social observation, and brilliant ensemble playing, this film stands among Altman's finest achievements.

Like many of his European counterparts during the 1970s, Altman progressively abandoned conventional narrative to develop his own highly personal style. Certain hallmarks make an Altman film of the era easy to identify: the overlapping dialogue and the experimental use of sound; the sardonic humor; the visual lushness and density, based on an uncommonly perceptive use of the wide-angle and telephoto-zoom lenses; and the intriguingly unusual faces of his repertory company (Shelley Duvall, Michael Murphy, Bert Remsen, et al.). It is argued that style sometimes takes precedence over substance in these films, but it seems more accurate to suggest that in works such as *3 Women*, style and substance are indistinguishable.

In the 1970s, Altman saw Americans with their raw nerves exposed at a time in American history when the conflicting demands of community and individual freedom were never more extreme, and he became an epic poet of that conflict. Problems of artistic consistency (and they do exist) notwithstanding, Altman throughout his career made the most intellectually honest films about the American experience of any director since Orson Welles. Unlike Welles, however, Altman typically worked with more economy and discipline than his contemporaries, and his strong comeback in the 1990s fulfilled Gary Arnold's prediction of 1976: that by the time he retired, Altman would be the only American filmmaker of his generation with as many major films to his credit as the directors who worked in Hollywood during its Golden Age.

The American Film Industry in the Age of "Kidpix"

The 1980s began with the single largest financial disaster ever to hit a major studio, when Michael Cimino's $40 million adult Western, *Heaven's Gate* (1980), was withdrawn from distribution immediately following its release, amid critics' charges of incomprehensibility. Actually one of the decade's better films, this three-hour-and-forty-minute epic about the destruction of America's frontier due to ruthless capitalism nevertheless went down to perdition itself, taking United Artists as a corporate entity with it.

In this context, it was probably inevitable that an industry that during the 1970s had enjoyed some of the greatest profits in its history from films targeted for children (*Star Wars*, 1977; *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, 1977; and *Superman*, 1978) and teenagers (*Saturday Night Fever*, 1977; and *Grease*, 1978) would turn nearly wholesale to such productions in the wake of *Heaven's Gate*. Furthermore, the industry was now being run by corporate attorneys and accountants, who lacked the experience of industry veterans and who tended to rely on vehicles with proven track records and on films containing graphic sex, violence, or, preferably, both combined.



The massacre of "citizens" scene near the end of the brilliant but ruinous *Heaven's Gate* (Michael Cimino, 1980).

An alarming manifestation of sex and violence was the flood of "psycho-slasher" films that glutted the domestic market in the wake of John Carpenter's ultrasuccessful *Halloween* (1978), an artful low-budget chiller that grossed $50 million on a $400,000 investment. The formula—confirmed by the record-breaking profits of the oafishly directed *Friday the 13th* (Sean S. Cunningham, 1980)—involves the serial murder of teenagers by a ruthless, unstoppable psychotic, with plenty of gratuitous sex and mayhem, and with realistic gore provided by high-tech makeup and special-effects artists such as Dick Smith, Rob Bottin, and Tom Savini, who became stars in their own right. There were precedents for psycho-killer violence in Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), and the exploitation of gore had existed at the periphery of the industry for decades—for example, in the "splatter" movies of Herschell Gordon Lewis, *Blood Feast* (1963), *Two Thousand Maniacs!* (1964), *Color Me Blood Red* (1964), and others.

Yet slasher films took it fully into the R-rated mainstream in literally hundreds of Halloween/Friday the 13th spin-offs, interminable sequels, and imitations. In fact, *Variety* reported twenty-five slashers among the fifty top-grossing films of 1981, a year in which slashers accounted for nearly 60 percent of all domestic releases. The wave of popularity peaked shortly thereafter, but slasher films remained a regular feature of the annual production schedule, and their porno-violent chic became obligatory for many mainstream horror films, such as *Poltergeist* (Tobe Hooper, 1982), *The Hunger* (Tony Scott, 1983), and *Fright Night* (Tom Holland, 1985); for some science-fiction films, such as *Aliens* (James Cameron, 1986), *RoboCop* (Paul Verhoeven, 1987), and *Total Recall* (Paul Verhoeven, 1990); and for many thrillers, such as *Body Double* (Brian De Palma, 1984), *Jagged Edge* (Richard Marquand, 1985), and *Angel Heart* (Alan Parker, 1987). Their grim social implications notwithstanding, slashers became an important staple of the home-video and **cable television** markets, owing to the sheer number in which they were produced. By the 1990s, their gore-drenched sensationalism had become a staple of tabloid television shows and pervaded crime reporting on television news.



E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial (Steven Spielberg, 1982).

On a lighter note, science fiction/fantasy—which ran the gamut from Steven Spielberg's then all-time box-office champ, *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), and runners-up, *Ghostbusters* (Ivan Reitman, 1984) and *Gremlins* (Joe Dante, 1984), to Lucasfilm's $35 million fiasco *Howard the Duck* (William Huyck, 1986)—was pervasively present in the 1980s. So, too, was adventure/fantasy, in the vein of Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984), and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), as well as in the sword-and-sorcery genre, popularized by *Conan the Barbarian* (John Milius, 1982), *The Beastmaster* (Don Coscarelli, 1983), and *Willow* (Ron Howard, 1988), a type that owed its appeal to the role-playing board game Dungeons and Dragons.

Most of these films were rated PG and relied heavily on action and special effects to attract an audience that cut across broad demographic groups. However, through a variety of tools, ranging from television to tie-ins, they were marketed mainly to young people. So, too, were the so-called teenpix, a category of films created to exploit the PG-13 rating when it was instituted in 1984. This form had clear antecedents both during the 1980s—for example, *Little Darlings* (Ronald F. Maxwell, 1980), *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (Amy Heckerling, 1982), and *Valley Girl* (Martha Coolidge, 1983)—and in previous decades (e.g., AIP's "Beach Blanket" cycle). Inspired by the financial success of the R-rated *Risky Business* (Paul Brickman) in 1983, filmmakers produced a glut of teen and preteen comedies with sexual/social themes during the next several years.

The master of intelligent teenpix in the 1980s was producer-director John Hughes (1950–2009), whose *Sixteen Candles* (1984), *The Breakfast Club* (1985), *Weird Science* (1985), *Pretty in Pink* (1986; directed by Howard Deutch), *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986), and *Some Kind of Wonderful* (1987; directed by Deutch) all show a fine grasp of the social anxieties created by the rigid class stratifications of American high schools. So lucrative was the teen market in the mid-1980s that films such as *The Last Starfighter* (Nick Castle, 1984) and *Back to the Future* (Robert Zemeckis, 1985), which combined teen comedy with other genres (science fiction in both cases), became instant hits. Perhaps the apex (or the nadir) of age regression was



Production still from *The Breakfast Club* (John Hughes, 1985), with Ally Sheedy, Judd Nelson, Anthony Michael Hall, Emilio Estevez, and Molly Ringwald.

reached in this era by *Pee Wee's Big Adventure* (Tim Burton, 1985)—an admittedly hilarious, even brilliant, film—in which the infantile title character has a series of picaresque misadventures while searching for his stolen bicycle, a clear travesty of Vittorio De Sica's neorealist classic *Bicycle Thieves* (1948).

Developments in Film Stock

It was during the 1970s that cinematographers, or directors of photography (DPs), emerged as auteurs in their own right. This had partly to do with the introduction and/or diffusion of new technologies such as the variable-focus zoom lens, light-weight 35mm cameras (e.g., Panavision's 25-pound Panaflex), and gyro-stabilized camera mounts—most notably, the Steadicam. The most fundamental innovation, however, was in the sensitivity of film stocks.

During the 1970s, Eastman introduced several new color negative stocks that had high contrast, finer grain, and increased color saturation (brightness and luminance), qualities that worked together to produce sharp, clean images. Yet cinematographers who wanted darker images responded by desaturating them in two distinct ways. Some, such as Gordon Willis—*The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972) and *The Godfather, Part II* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974)—"pushed" their negatives in development to increase their speed and achieve a darker look. This process, known as "forced development," can also be observed in the work of DP Michael Chapman,



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(left) [1] For *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976), director of photography Michael Chapman "pushed" the night-rated Technicolor stock in development to capture the neon-lit night worlds so crucial to the movie's style and themes. [2] Cinematographer Nestor Almendros also "pushed" the negative for *Days of Heaven* (Terrence Malick, 1978); additional photography by Haskell Wexler. [3] For *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (Robert Altman, 1971), cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond "flashed" the film stock to create an old-fashioned, faded look, modeled on the paintings of Andrew Wyeth. [4] In addition to flashing the negative, like many young cinematographers of the 1970s, DP Vilmos Zsigmond used heavy lens diffusion—via fog filters, dust, smoke, and so on—to soften and stylize his images for *Heaven's Gate* (Michael Cimino, 1980). [5] For *Bound for Glory* (Hal Ashby, 1976), a Woodie Guthrie biopic, DP Haskell Wexler "flashed" the negative and used heavy diffusion to achieve a softening of shadows and a pasteling of colors that evoked the Oklahoma Dust Bowl during the Great Depression. The film won the Academy Award for Best Cinematography.

who pushed night-rated film for *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976) and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Phil Kaufman, 1978); and Nestor Almendros, who did the same for *Days of Heaven* (1978) and whose exteriors were shot primarily in what director Terrence Malick called "the magic hour," the twenty to twenty-five minutes of light left after the sun has set.

A similar laboratory procedure known as "flashing" or "fogging" was used by several other cinematographers during the 1970s. It involved exposing the negative briefly to white light in a printer before or after exposure to increase its speed and desaturate the color. The DP most closely associated with flashing in the 1970s was Vilmos Zsigmond, who used it to tone down the brilliant greens of the north Georgia mountains in *Deliverance* (John Boorman, 1972) and to lend an old-fashioned, faded quality (modeled on the paintings of Andrew Wyeth) to the images of *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (Robert Altman, 1971) and *Heaven's Gate* (Michael Cimino, 1980), for which he flashed both the negative and the print. Haskell Wexler flashed nearly the entire negative of the Woody Guthrie biopic *Bound for Glory* (Hal Ashby, 1976) and used heavy lens diffusion to achieve a softening of shadows and a pasteling of colors that evoked the atmosphere of the Oklahoma Dust Bowl during the Great Depression.

The Effects of Video

While teenagers and their younger siblings were driving American box-office receipts toward an all-time high of $4.3 billion in 1987, their parents were at home

watching the same movies on television sets, for during the 1980s the fortunes of Hollywood were being affected by new technologies of video delivery and imaging as never before. Cable networks, direct-broadcast satellites, and half-inch videocassettes provided unprecedented new means of motion-picture distribution. In addition, **computer-generated graphics** provided new means of production, especially in the realm of special effects, forecasting the arrival of a fully automated "digital cinema." Some studios, such as Columbia and Universal, devoted most of their schedules to the production of telefilm for the commercial networks, while nearly all the studios began to presell their theatrical features for cable and videocassette distribution.

Indeed, TriStar, one of the industry's major producer/distributors, began as a joint venture of CBS, Columbia Pictures, and Time Inc.'s premium cable service, Home Box Office (HBO). Starting in 1985, independent film producers released more motion pictures than the major studios for the first time since the early decades of the twentieth century, so voracious had the cable and home-video markets become. In 1987, combined video rentals and sales totaled an astounding $7.2 billion ($4.4 billion in rentals; $2.8 billion in sales), or nearly twice that year's record-breaking income from theatrical rentals.

In terms of theatrical filmmaking, this penetration of video during the 1980s meant a step toward the demise of the normative 35mm feature, as producers sought properties with video or "televisual" characteristics that would play well on the small screen on one hand, or that would draw audiences into the theaters with the promise of spectacular 70mm photography and multitrack Dolby sound on the other. In the former category were such music video–style films as *Flashdance* (Adrian Lyne, 1983), *Footloose* (Herbert Ross, 1984), *Streets of Fire* (Walter Hill, 1984), and *Dirty Dancing* (Emile Ardolino, 1987), all of which also cashed in on the teenpix phenomenon, and in the latter category were films such as *Amadeus* (Milos Forman, 1984), *Runaway Train* (Andrei Konchalovski, 1985), *The Color Purple* (Steven Spielberg, 1985), *Aliens* (James Cameron, 1986), *The Untouchables* (Brian De Palma, 1987), *Empire of the Sun* (Steven Spielberg, 1987), and *The Last Emperor* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1987), whose maximum effect derives from visual and aural spectacle. Films such as *Top Gun*



Kelly McGillis and Tom Cruise in *Top Gun* (Tony Scott, 1986).

(Tony Scott, 1986), structured as a feature-length music video but full of breathtaking aerial cinematography that can only be fully appreciated on widescreen, managed to have it both ways—which is probably why it earned more than $177 million.

Top Gun also had the canniness to be a military film at a time when that long-buried genre was coming back into fashion. Repressed culturally by ambivalent feelings about the Vietnam War and commercially by the middling box-office performance of such earlier Vietnam-themed films as *Go Tell the Spartans* (Ted Post, 1978), *Coming Home* (Hal Ashby, 1978), and *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979), the war film reemerged like an exploding land mine when Oliver Stone's *Platoon* hit the screen in 1986. *Platoon* went on to become one of the highest-grossing American films of all time. It was followed in rapid succession by a spate of Vietnam films of varying quality and political bias but obvious sincerity—*Gardens of Stone* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1987); *Hamburger Hill* (John Irvin, 1987); *Full Metal Jacket* (Stanley Kubrick, 1987); *Bat*21* (Peter Markle, 1988); *Good Morning, Vietnam* (Barry Levinson, 1988); *Off Limits* (Christopher Crowe, 1988); and Brian De Palma's horrific *Casualties of War* (1989). Some other military films seemed less sincere, however, as the studios responded to the patriotic climate of the Reagan years by producing their most jingoistic works since the Korean War, films that endorsed the myth of political betrayal in Vietnam, such as *Uncommon Valor* (Ted Kotcheff, 1983); that exploited the fear of a Soviet invasion, such as *Red Dawn* (John Milius, 1985); and that glorified military vigilantism, such as *Born American* (Renny Harlin, 1986).

Perhaps because there was so little recognizably adult fare in the theaters, films with a "literary" quality, many of them British-made, were also popular in the American market during the 1980s, as is typical of a period of political reaction—for example, *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981), *Gandhi* (Richard Attenborough, 1982), *A Passage to India* (David Lean, 1984), *A Room with a View* (James Ivory, 1986), and *Out of Africa* (Sydney Pollack, 1985). Another adult genre that appeared in the second half of the decade was film noir. More generally characteristic of moral confusion than of a specific political condition, this film type had its first 1980s venue in the steamy and very nearly perfect *Body Heat* (1981), written and directed by Lawrence Kasdan, who would soon give America its first feature-length yuppie music video in *The Big Chill* (1983). After a lull of several years, film noir came back into its own as "neo-noir" in such well-made and intelligent films as *Black Widow* (Bob Rafelson, 1986), *Manhunter* (Michael Mann, 1986), *Fatal Attraction* (Adrian Lyne, 1987), *House of Games* (David Mamet, 1987), and *Frantic* (Roman Polanski, 1988), among many others.

This trend toward textbook reworkings of the dark 1940s genre continued strongly in the 1990s, when neo-noir became a major form of American film practice for first-time directors and veterans alike. Among the best entries of the decade were *After Dark, My Sweet* (James Foley, 1990) and *The Grifters* (Stephen Frears, 1990), both based on Jim Thompson novels; *Narrow Margin* (Peter Hyams, 1990; a remake of Richard Fleischer's 1952 original); *Cape Fear* (Martin Scorsese, 1991; a remake of J. Lee Thompson's 1962 original); *A Kiss before Dying* (James Dearden, 1991); *Liebestraum* (Mike Figgis, 1991); *Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven, 1992); *Night and the City* (Irwin Winkler, 1992; a remake of Jules Dassin's 1950 original); *Bad Lieutenant* (Abel Ferrara, 1992); *Reservoir Dogs* (Quentin Tarantino, 1992); *Red Rock West* (John Dahl, 1993); *True Romance* (Tony Scott, 1993); *Romeo Is Bleeding* (Peter Medak, 1994); and *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994).

Another phenomenon of the 1980s was the relative strength of independent production, briefly resurgent under the new regime of video delivery. Some of the most unusual and interesting work American cinema had seen for many years appeared from small companies such as Circle Films, Hemdale, Island Pictures, New Line Cinema, Cinecom, and Miramax. Most of these films were too original to have been made in the studio era and too eccentric for the mass-market economies of the 1980s. Most of their directors remained independent into the 1990s. Others entered the mainstream and began working for majors, as was the case with Susan Seidelman (*She Devil*, 1990); Joel Coen and his producer-writer brother, Ethan (*Miller's Crossing*, 1990; *Barton Fink*, 1991; and *The Hudsucker Proxy*, 1994); and Steven Soderbergh (*Out of Sight*, 1998). And yet another went on to become the most audaciously brilliant American filmmaker of the 1990s, as well as one of the industry's most influential writer-directors.

This was Oliver Stone (b. 1946), whose work has been both notoriously controversial and strikingly eclectic since the appearance of *Salvador* (1986). Based on the real-life experiences of journalist Richard Boyle in the early years of the Salvadoran

(right) Uma Thurman in *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994).


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civil war and deeply critical of American support for El Salvador's right-wing government, it was followed immediately by the grippingly realistic combat film *Platoon* (1986), which won four Academy Awards—Best Picture, Best Director, Best Film Editing (Claire Simpson-Crozier), and Best Sound—and catalyzed the revisionist Vietnam cycle noted earlier. *Wall Street* (1987) was no less stridently topical in its focus on the destructive greed of an Ivan Boesky–like arbitrager, and neither was *Talk Radio* (1988), which conflated Eric Bogosian's one-act play of the title with elements from the real-life murder of talk-show host Alan Berg.

Born on the Fourth of July (1989) referred to the cultural trauma of Vietnam in its account of a gung-ho Marine recruit who returns from the war paralyzed from the waist down and, after a torturous period of readjustment, becomes an antiwar activist. Based on the autobiography of Ron Kovic, this film powerfully evoked the divisiveness of Vietnam and won Academy Awards for Best Director and Best Editing (Joe Hutshing and David Brenner). After what many critics felt to be a self-indulgent, if penetrating, portrait of late-1960s rock and drug culture in *The Doors* (1991), Stone produced, in *JFK* (1991), one of the most dynamically controversial films in recent American history. Compared by David Ansen in his *Newsweek* review (12/23/91) to *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), *JFK* mixes documentary, pseudo-documentary, and theatrical footage to create a "countermyth" to the Warren Commission Report on the assassination of President Kennedy on November 22, 1963.



Moments after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in *JFK* (Oliver Stone, 1991).

Because it takes the widely discredited 1967 conspiracy investigation of New Orleans D.A. Jim Garrison as its vehicle, many critics accused the film of attempting to rewrite history. Yet in addition to some certifiably paranoid speculation, Stone puts more *accurate* information about the assassination and its aftermath on-screen in hundred and eighty-nine minutes than most contemporary audiences would have encountered in their lifetimes—and does so in such riveting, bravura fashion that few audiences could fail to attend. Nominated for all the major Academy Awards, *JFK* won Oscars for veteran Stone collaborators Robert Richardson (Cinematography) and Joe Hutshing and Pietro Scalia (Editing), and it stimulated a national debate about the veracity of the Warren Report and access to its sealed records, which led Congress to pass the JFK Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992, calling for the disclosure of virtually all the government's files by 2017.

Stone's next film, *Heaven & Earth* (1993), was based on the memoirs of Le Ly Haslip, a young Vietnamese peasant woman whose life was changed utterly by the war. In portraying Le Ly's odyssey from her shattered childhood through her difficult marriage to an American soldier and her adjustment to American life, Stone completed his Vietnam trilogy "through the looking-glass"—that is, showing the war from the perspective of its victims, as well as from its front line and home front.

Perhaps because of the media firestorm that greeted *JFK* and the accusations that Stone had used his own medium to twist the truth, he chose to make his next film a scathing indictment of media manipulation. At one level, *Natural Born Killers* (1994) is an ultraviolent, hell-bent-for-leather "criminal couple" movie that has the raw feel of an exploitation film—which, on this level, it most certainly is. At another level, it is about the violent media images that surround and engulf us, working their way into our psyches until they have become a crucial part of our mental lives, producing a national psychosis that creates couples like the film's, and audiences like ourselves. As the young lovers, Mickey and Mallory, go on a killing spree across New Mexico, genre elements from the *Gun Crazy/Bonnie and Clyde/Badlands* mode converge with slasher-style gore and a tradition of animated mayhem that extends from Saturday morning cartoons through Japanimation, to create a collage of the many ways violence is imaged in our culture. Catapulted to stardom by the media, Mickey and Mallory are captured and imprisoned for the murders of forty-eight "innocent" people, but when a true-crime TV journalist attempts a



Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis in *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994).

live-feed interview with Mickey on Superbowl Sunday, an apocalyptic prison riot ensues.

This event, playing on stereotypes from countless prison films and shot in the heroic-absurd mode of Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*, manipulates sound and image to put the audience on the side of the killers, who finally escape to freedom and, presumably, some future domestic bliss after killing another fifty-odd people on live TV, including the paradigmatic TV journalist. Stylistically, *Natural Born Killers* picks up where *JFK* left off. The narrative, if it can be called that, is filmed by Robert Richardson in a variety of stocks (35mm color, black and white, Super 8, and video) at different speeds, and integrated with a wide variety of animated and electronic effects; in terms of editing (Hank Corwin and Brian Berdan), it alternates between the style of a music video and live TV, and there is not a continuity cut in the entire film. Stone creates a rhythm of violence that is frenetic from the start but rises to a fever pitch during the riot, and he keeps upping the ante on what is acceptable to watch until we are deeply implicated in the most prurient forms of voyeurism that media can pander to, because *Natural Born Killers* is ultimately about Stone's manipulation of us as we watch it.

Nixon (1995) was a less successful extension of the political subtext of *JFK*, structured (somewhat egregiously) in the manner of *Citizen Kane* (1941), that managed to capture some of the thirty-seventh president's manifold contradictions, such as his combination of political astuteness with rampant paranoia, and offered a chilling vision of the White House under siege in the waning days of the Watergate scandal. (Furthermore, Anthony Hopkins was astonishingly effective in the title role, considering that he neither looked nor sounded like Nixon.) Although his cinematic revision of 1960s history may have ended with *JFK*, in films such as *Natural Born Killers*—and, to a lesser extent, *Nixon*—Oliver Stone was still making late-1960s–style movies whose defining mark was their challenge to think seriously about social issues and to stir people up about them as never before. Much of Stone's work since then has been self-indulgent (*U Turn* [1997]) or inflated (*Any Given Sunday* [1999], *Alexander* [2004]), but between 1986 and 1995, he produced enduring works of social criticism that few American filmmakers have rivaled since.



Michael Fassbender in *Prometheus* (Ridley Scott, 2012).



21

The Digital Domain

Since the mid-1990s, digital-imaging technology has transformed the making, distribution, and exhibition of feature films on a global scale. There is hardly an aspect of the film industry that has not been changed by digital technology, some of it spectacularly obvious but much of it invisible to all but the industry professionals who use it and are affected by it.

Digital Production

Film is an **analog** medium: it creates images by recording the light bouncing off objects in empirical reality onto a photosensitive chemical surface (the emulsion-coated negative stock), focused by a lens. As light is converted into film, the quality of the images varies with the quality of the light, the emulsion, and the lens, and as in all analog media, this process of transference involves some degradation, or loss of information, between the original and the master copy. When the master copy is duplicated further to produce other copies, a process known in film as "print generation," even more information is lost.

In digital image recording, however, light is not converted into another medium, but into a series of binary numbers, an abstraction that has no physical relationship to the original. The result is a **digital file** that can be used to reconstruct the original image or be manipulated by a computer through mathematical formulas to create a new one. In either case, the image



Martin Freeman in *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* (Peter Jackson, 2012).

is manufactured through the digital interpretation of numbers. This information can be copied or transferred endlessly, through digital means, without degradation. In effect, each digital copy is not a replica of the original but is its clone. Thus, digital-imaging technology offers the filmmaker complete control over the image without any additional loss of quality, limited only by computer memory.

Perhaps the ultimate filmic manifestation of digital technology, **CGI** (the acronym for **computer-generated imagery**) stands for the entire field of digital effects—from the manipulation of a film's color palette in postproduction to the creation of 3-D objects and characters entirely in the digital realm without the intervention of photography. Fundamentally, CGI is a form of computer animation that produces images, frame by frame, from thousands of discrete digital parts (or pixels), each of which the computer calculates and precisely positions to create a "virtual" reality, whether it be color that didn't exist in the original medium (as in the practice of "colorizing" black-and-white films from the studio era for video) or some illusory three-dimensional world (as in the Middle Earth in Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit* [2012]).

The first computer-generated images appeared sparingly in films during the late 1970s and the early 1980s, becoming more common in the late 1980s and the early 1990s as computing power increased and costs went proportionally down. During this period, CGI was used primarily for special effects, but filmmakers soon realized that it could be used in more mundane ways to achieve production economies by creating synthetic sets and props, erasing unwanted elements in principal photography (e.g., "flying wires" in martial-arts sequences), simulating weather and atmospheric conditions (adding rain, snow, and clouds; replacing skies), and multiplying small groups of extras into large crowds.

By the mid-1990s, as increasingly sophisticated **animation software** became available, CGI had become an important feature of nearly all films that relied on special effects, and such films—especially those in the science-fiction and disaster genres—had become an industry mainstay. At the same time, CGI-induced production economies grew more complex in their ability to create lighting effects such as day for night, to enhance lens optics, and to provide a variety of traditionally cost-intensive physical effects and stunts.

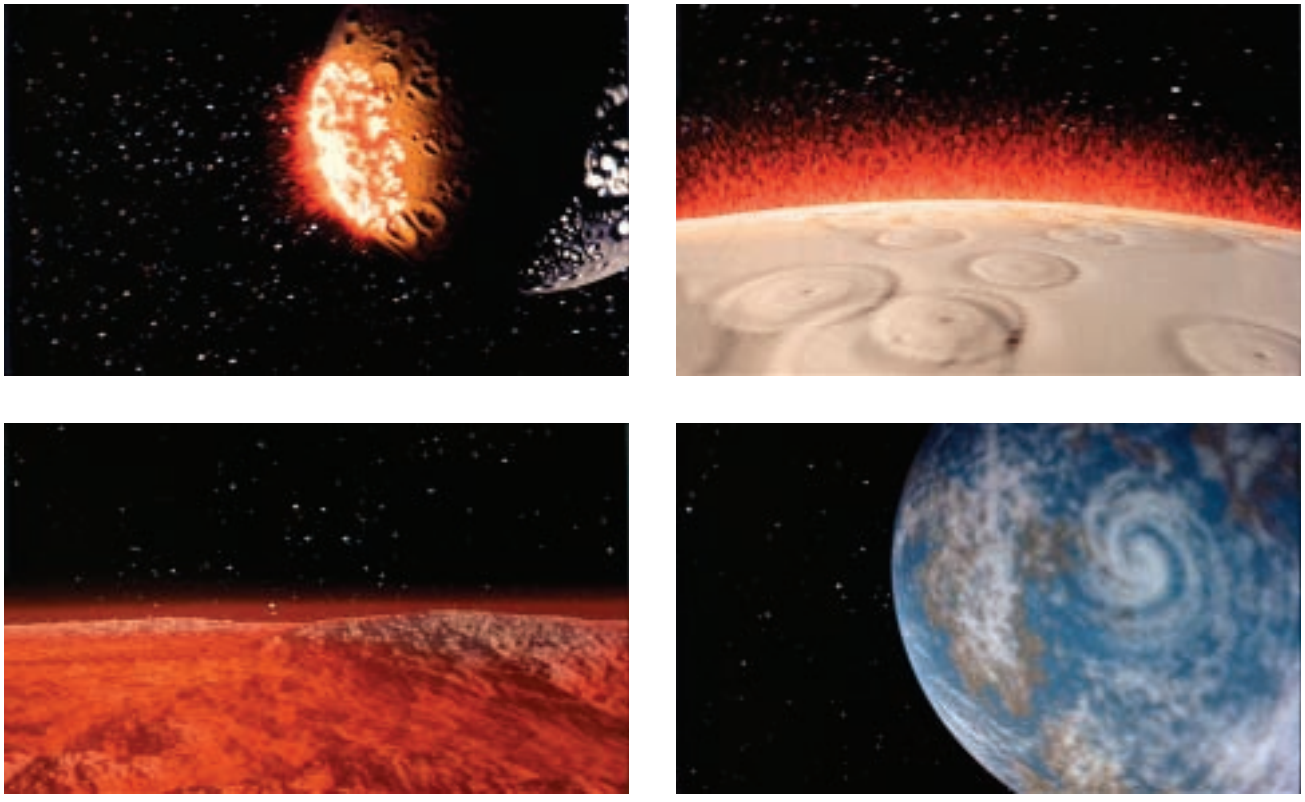
Origins of Computer Animation, 1962–1988

CGI was first used in the late 1950s in the aerospace industry to create high-resolution images for flight simulators (the Boeing Corporation coining the acronym

in 1960 to describe its air-traffic-control displays) and, during the 1960s, for a variety of other industrial applications. In 1969, the Evans & Sutherland Company unveiled Line Drawing System-1, the first computer-assisted design (CAD) workstation for the production of **wireframes**, the line-based polygonal drawings that provide the foundation of all three-dimensional computer animation. At about the same time, another computer animation company, the Mathematical Applications Group Inc. (MAGI), developed a process called "ray tracing" to simulate reflections, refractions, and shadows in three-dimensional models with a degree of optical precision that approached that of photography. Ray-tracing technology provided a giant step toward the kind of **photorealistic** animation that would transform cinema in the 1990s, but it required large amounts of computer time and memory. Thus, when CGI first entered feature films, it was as a means of representing the two-dimensional operations of spaceship instrumentation and computer displays in science-fiction films, such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968) and *The Andromeda Strain* (Robert Wise, 1970). For much of the 1970s, it was broadcasters, rather than filmmakers, who maximized the potential of computer graphics, incorporating them into flying network logos and spot commercials, where the attention they attracted was most profitable.

The film debut of **three-dimensional computer animation** came in *Futureworld* (Richard T. Heffron, 1976), for which American International Pictures (AIP) contracted Dr. Edwin Catmull, head of the New York Institute of Technology's computer graphics lab, to design a wireframe hand for display on a monitor screen within the film. Critics and audiences barely noticed this computer-generated hand, but it attracted the attention of George Lucas, who would hire Catmull, following the phenomenal success of *Star Wars* (1977), to head his newly created Lucasfilm Computer Development Division in 1978. This was an early component of Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), the special-effects house that Lucas had established in Van Nuys, California, in 1975 to provide effects for *Star Wars*, which, although it pioneered the use of computerized motion control, did not use CGI as such.

However, after its move to Marin County in the Bay area in 1980, ILM soon provided the first extensive sequence of photorealistic computer animation to appear on screen—the "Genesis effect" in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* (Nicholas Meyer, 1982), wherein a dead planet is transformed by a missile blast into a



The "Genesis effect" sequence in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* (Nicholas Meyer, 1982).



In *The Last Starfighter* (Nick Castle, 1984), Digital Productions simulated all the film's special effects in a state-of-the-art Cray X-MP computer to save on costs, but the animation retained a cartoonlike quality because it failed to compensate for optical phenomena, such as motion blur.

vibrant, Edenic place in about sixty seconds. Using software designed by Catmull, the sequence involved the creation of the first **digital matte painting** and new computer-graphics algorithms to generate fire, mountains, and shoreline from fractal equations.

In the same year, Walt Disney Productions, which had used CGI to simulate the black hole in *The Black Hole* (Gary Nelson, 1979), produced *Tron* (Steven Lisberger), now regarded as a breakthrough in computer animation. This film, a fantasy about a man who enters his own computer program, combined live action with computer-generated scenes, of which there were 235, totaling more than fifteen minutes. *Tron* thus contained more CGI than any previous film, and Disney bid the work out to four of the top computer-graphics studios of the day. With a negative cost of $17 million, *Tron* was Disney's second-most-expensive film (*The Black Hole*, at $18.5 million, being first), and although it turned a profit, it was not the watershed in digital production that Disney had hoped.

Hollywood's ardor toward CGI cooled for the rest of the decade, but *Tron* inspired a younger generation of computer graphic artists and advanced the progress of Digital Productions, a new company formed in 1982, which staked its claim through the $10.5 million purchase of a Cray X-MP, the most powerful high-speed computer for graphics generation then available. This "supercomputer" was immediately contracted to produce twenty-seven minutes of deep-space sequences—some 230 separate scenes—for Lorimar's *The Last Starfighter* (Nick Castle, 1984), making it the first feature film in history to simulate *all* of its special effects. Although the simulation cost $4.9 million of the film's $14 million budget, the producers figured that its digital effects had been completed in one-third the time and at half the expense of traditional effects.

Despite such economies, *The Last Starfighter* barely broke even at the box office, but it had signaled an important principle—that CGI could not only be used to create photorealistic simulations cost-effectively,

but that it could do so *more* efficiently and *less* expensively than the same scenes played out in real time. In retrospect, what made the simulation imperfect was its very perfection; it took filmmakers nearly another decade to realize that optical imperfections, such as **motion blur**, had to be programmed into their computer simulations to replicate the look of real-time photography.

Meanwhile, at ILM, Ed Catmull's computer division had developed Pixar, a high-resolution computer specifically designed for graphics, the first such machine dedicated exclusively to CGI. Under the direction of **visual-effects (VFX) supervisor** Dennis Muren (b. 1946), ILM used it to create CGI sequences for two other films: the three-dimensional holograph of Endor Moon and the Death Star in *Star Wars: Episode VI—The Return of the Jedi* (Richard Marquand, 1983) and the sword-wielding stained-glass knight who emerges from a chapel window to chase a priest in *Young Sherlock Holmes* (Barry Levinson, 1985). For the latter film, an electronic paint station was used to create the knight in the computer, where it was animated three-dimensionally and given its final appearance. The stained-glass knight thus became the feature film's first **computer-generated character**—a direct antecedent of all of the dinosaurs, giant insects, ogres, and Orcs to follow. The process was so successful, in fact, that laser scanning has since become the primary means of outputting and compositing CGI.

The next advances in CGI involved the technology of **morphing**, the process whereby one image is gradually transformed into another. ILM was once again the industry leader here, although in 1986 Lucas had spun off Catmull's Computer Development Division and sold his controlling interest in it to Steve Jobs of Apple Computers. (Renamed Pixar, after Catmull's computer, the company would become the world's first digital-animation studio and the producer of *Toy Story* [John Lasseter, 1995], the first feature made completely with CGI.) The morphs for *Willow* (Ron Howard, 1988), wherein a sorceress is transformed from a goat into an ostrich and then successively into a turtle, a tiger, and finally a human, were accomplished by digitizing images of an actress, a real tiger, and several animal puppets and merging them progressively in the computer. The transformation sequence was then scanned directly onto film and composited with live action in an optical printer.

The metamorphosis software, known as the "morphing system," which permitted the manipulation of images not only frame by frame but pixel by pixel, was authored by Doug Smythe, who in 1992 won a Technical Achievement Award from the Academy for creating the morph computer-software program. This same software was used a year later to create the "Donovan's Destruction" sequence in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (Steven Spielberg, 1989), in which a Nazi-sympathizing industrialist drinks from the Holy Grail, then ages rapidly and disintegrates on screen. As in *Willow*, the various stages of decomposition were represented by models whose images were scanned into the computer and merged, but they were also digitally composited there before being scanned back out to film, thus creating the first all-digital composite. The practices of morphing and **digital compositing** are common today, and in fact, commercial software for both is available that will run on a desktop computer, but in the late 1980s, they were still very difficult to accomplish. Although the Pixar computers of the era were capable of manipulating 80 million **polygons**—the basic building blocks of CGI—it took sixteen hours to scan and store one minute of film.

Industrial Light & Magic

From *The Abyss* to *Death Becomes Her*

The evolution of digital effects in the cinema was at this point greatly accelerated by two films contracted out to ILM, both written and directed by James Cameron. For *The Abyss* (1989), produced by 20th Century–Fox, Cameron had conceived an irregularly shaped, organic-looking "pseudopod" that communicated by forming the faces of characters in the film. The creature was supposed to be made entirely of water, a virtually transparent substance that both reflects and refracts light and is not easy to simulate. Cameron had explored several options for creating the pseudopod through traditional means, including stop-motion animation and hydraulics, before he was sold on 3-D animation by Dennis Muren at ILM. In what would be their biggest CGI project to date, Muren's team created a seventy-five-second sequence of twenty-seven shots on powerful new workstations purchased from Silicon Graphics. (Although the pseudopod was created digitally, it was composited with live-action elements optically—large-scale digital compositing awaited the advent of the CCD scanner described further on.)



Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio and Ed Harris encounter the "pseudopod" in *The Abyss* (James Cameron, 1989).

In addition to improved morphing software and programs for realistic water creation, ILM's *Abyss* team introduced the **digital set**—a completely malleable digital environment within which the animator can control such variables as lighting, camera position and movement, and the movement of objects on the set. Unlike earlier digital effects, with the possible exception of the "Genesis effect" in *Star Trek II*, the pseudopod sequence was central to the narrative of *The Abyss* and received much critical attention. The film won the 1989 Academy Award for Best Visual Effects and provided a major boost to the computer-graphics department at ILM, where it was seen as the culmination of all the division's work since 1978. It also demonstrated to the industry at large that CGI had reached the point where it could provide credible photorealistic effects integrated with live action in cost-effective ways.

For Carolco Pictures, ILM's digital effects for Cameron's *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991), also supervised by Dennis Muren, took morphing to the next level with the T-1000 cyborg, the first computer-generated character realistically modeled on the three-dimensional human form. In the film, the T-1000 is composed of liquid chrome that can morph into any shape, and the ILM team created it by drawing grid lines on a live actor's body and scanning them into the computer as the actor moved, in order to create a digital skeleton, or wireframe. Known as **motion capture**, this process was initially developed for the medical industry to analyze the dynamics of physical injuries and was later adapted to the needs of film and video game production. At the time of *Terminator 2*, only a small part of the human form could be recorded in a single scan, so the motion of various body parts had to be captured separately and then assembled into a whole-body image. (Present-day motion-capture systems can not only capture a moving body in its entirety, but allow it to be viewed from virtually any angle for rotation during postproduction, which facilitates the process of 3-D animation.)

Once the wireframe of the T-1000 was built, ILM artists gave it photorealistic features such as shading, color, and texture—a process known in computer

graphics as **rendering**. Using a new software program called Body Sock, they gave the figure musculature and a smooth, continuous surface. As conceived by Cameron, this surface was metallic, but it could not have been otherwise because the software did not yet exist to give it the textures of human skin and hair. To handle the huge volume of digital work (100 elements and nearly 8,000 frames of CGI), ILM used a new type of scanner—the High Resolution CCD (Charge Coupled Device) Digital Input Scanner—which had been in development since 1988 and could scan a film frame at ten times the speed of earlier scanners (between twenty and thirty seconds per frame). The CCD scanner also output a high-resolution image ready for intercutting with production footage, so that all of *Terminator 2*'s digital-effects shots could be digitally composited without recourse to an optical scanner.

The **CCD input scanner** was revolutionary because it enabled effects artists to enter their material into the digital realm, manipulate it there, and then exit with high-resolution images for printing. Before it, there had been no standard and reliable input scanner for feature-film production, and most digitally created elements were being optically composited. By 1994, the CCD scanner had made the optical printer nearly obsolete. Together with digital-software toolboxes and output systems, it ensured that images could be created, animated, and composited within an entirely digital environment.

Industry response to *Terminator 2* was overwhelmingly positive (as was the public's, which made it the highest-earning film of 1991, with $122.5 million in domestic grosses), and the film won four technical Academy Awards, including Best Visual Effects. Suddenly, everybody wanted to "go digital," and new effects houses began to appear all over the country. Universal Pictures bankrolled the next major advance in CGI when an advanced scanner was used to produce 45 of 140 visual-effects shots in *Death Becomes Her* (1992), some as long as a minute in duration. For this film, director Robert Zemeckis (b. 1952) teamed up with ILM effects supervisor Ken Ralston (b. 1955) to meet the difficult challenge of realistically simulating human skin and anatomy in the digital realm.

Like James Cameron, Zemeckis had consistently been on the cutting edge in his use of special effects. He had collaborated with Ralston on the effects-intensive *Back to the Future* (1985) and its two sequels (*Back to the Future Part II* [1989] and *Back to the Future Part III* [1990]), which pioneered the use of digital **wire removal** for the flying sequences. (Wire-removal



The T-1000 cyborg (Robert Patrick) morphs into human form in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (James Cameron, 1991); the film won the 1991 Academy Award for Best Visual Effects as well as three other technical awards.

software enables artists to manipulate the pixels of digitized shots so that wire rigs, harnesses, cranes, and cables can be colored over and melded into surrounding backgrounds; separate software adds simulated film grain so that the digital image will match the photographic one.)

Their visual-effects work on *Death Becomes Her* introduced a wide range of software that had not been available for *Terminator 2* just a year earlier, and according to digital artist Doug Smythe, the film became a "guinea pig" for programs that would be used

for *Jurassic Park* in 1993. Because *Death Becomes Her* contains multiple sequences involving maimed and contorted bodies, new morphing software was developed that could combine CGI with makeup effects (by Dick Smith) and **animatronic puppetry**. This included a painting and digital **rotoscoping** program called ColorBurst, a digital bluescreen matte program (designed by Smythe) known as C-Bal, and a refined version of MM2, a digital **pin-blocking** program for aligning and interlocking all the elements of a composited shot, so that a director could move his camera without compensating for computer graphics. *Death Becomes Her* also innovated a program that synchronized the camera's frames-per-second (fps) speed with its shutter aperture, so that effects sequences could be filmed at variable speeds continuously. Overall, the film marked an exponential leap forward in organic simulation, an achievement recognized when it received the 1992 Academy Award for Best Visual Effects.

The Impact of *Jurassic Park*, 1993–1996

Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993) for Universal Pictures is well known as a landmark film in the history of CGI for its use of computer-generated dinosaurs. Yet Spielberg had originally intended to use full-scale animatronic puppets, provided by Stan Winston (b. 1946), creator of the alien queen in *Aliens* (James Cameron, 1986), and animated via Phil Tippett's proprietary **Go-Motion system**, which used computer-controlled rods to move objects in real time; the only CGI was to involve two shots of a stampeding gallimimus herd, provided by ILM. Dennis Muren, however, convinced the director that it would be possible to create photorealistic digital dinosaurs for the entire film. Winston's animatronic creatures would still be used for some shots, and Tippett (b. 1951) was retained to work with ILM on its animation.

The goal was to create three-dimensional, full-bodied dinosaurs that would look like real animals, rather than "movie monsters," for digital compositing with live action. To expedite this work, ILM set up a fiber-optic video and audio link between its Marin County facility, the Tippett studio across the Bay in Berkeley, and Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment in Los Angeles, and the team ultimately produced fifty-two CGI shots for the film. (During postproduction, Spielberg was in Kraków, Poland, on location for *Schindler's List*, and the fiber-optic link was extended to him there by satellite, its pathway protected by digital encryption.)

Because Tippett, whose studio produced fifteen of these (those representing the T-rex attack on two cars and their occupants, and those of the two raptors hunting children in the conference center's kitchen),



found it awkward to use the computer keyboard and mouse, he invented the **Digital Input Device (DID)**, essentially a blending of stop-motion and computer-animation technologies, to facilitate the **modeling** and animation of the dinosaurs. The DID consisted of an **armature**—a model or a puppet with articulated joints—with electronic sensors at the pivot points that could create a wireframe model in the computer when put through a series of stop-motion maneuvers.

The other thirty-seven CGI shots (the gallimimus stampede, the concluding battle between the T-rex and the raptors, and several leaf-eating brachiosaurs) were created at ILM, using newly evolved software programs that represented significant advances in the achievement of photorealism:

1. *ViewPaint:* new texture-mapping software that allowed artists to paint the surface of a dinosaur as if it were a real 3-D sculpture by enabling them to rotate the wireframe during the painting process;
2. *Enveloping:* ILM proprietary software that worked with Body Sock to give computer-generated dinosaur flesh the appearance of actually moving against muscle and bone; and
3. *Softimage:* a commercial package for 3-D character animation that included **inverse kinematics**, which has the ability to link one movement with another or others as in life (e.g., parts of a leg or an arm could be made to work together, such as the thigh moving with the knee, or the wrist with the forearm and the elbow), and **"match moving,"** which makes it possible to precisely match computer-generated virtual camera movements with those actually made on the set.
4. During the last stages of the process, artists painted corrections directly on the finalized composite using Photoshop or Parallax's Matador software. Then, ILM **technical directors (TDs)** added motion blur to every shot to make it look like the product of real-time cinematography.

As TD (technical director) George Murphy put it: "We spent a lot of time adding defects that real-location photographers work so hard to get rid of, such as added film grain for a more organic and natural look." They even added "camera bounce" to the T-rex sequences, as if the cinematographer were responding to the creature's shattering footfalls. The finished product so seamlessly blended computer graphics, animatronics, and live-action photography that even today it is difficult to determine which is which.

If *Terminator 2* had created digital fever in the film industry, *Jurassic Park* caused a revolution. Phil Tippett, who would be one of its leaders, put it this way: "When I saw *T2*, I felt like the tide was pulling at my calves, but it wasn't until those first T-rex tests on *Jurassic Park* that I saw the tidal wave on the horizon." Dennis Muren was even more succinct: as filmmakers, he said, "computer graphics is now the most potent tool we have."

The fact that *Jurassic Park* became, based on international grosses exceeding $1 billion, the most popular film in history at that time offered ringing confirmation of this perspective. From being an embellishment to science-fiction and action films ten years earlier, CGI had become the driving force of American cinema. In a clear case of putting the cart before the horse, for the rest of the decade big-budget projects would be valorized in Hollywood for the amount of CGI they could be made to contain. The years 1993 to 2001 became a novelty period for a new kind of cinema, and in the same way that "talkies" dominated the early sound era and epic spectacle characterized the early years of widescreen, so, too, did a cinema of digital legerdemain dominate the early years of photorealistic CGI. It was cinema that said brazenly to its audience, "I am showing you the impossible and fantastic, not because it has merit or meaning, but simply because I *can*."

(left) A watershed for the CGI-driven cinema of the latter 1990s, *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) featured a seamless blending of 3-D computer graphics, animatronics, and live action facilitated through innovations like ILM's Digital Input Device (DID).

Digital Domain and *Titanic*

The centrality of ILM in the development of CGI is indisputable, but there were other important contributors—Digital Domain, for example, the special-effects house founded by James Cameron, Stan Winston, and Scott Ross in the successful wake of *Terminator 2*. Digital Domain's most impressive achievement of the decade was its visual-effects work for *Titanic* (1997), for which it won yet another Oscar. *Titanic* employed a combination of traditional effects and CGI to simulate disaster on an epic scale. A full-scale 44-foot



Preparing a green-screen shot for *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997), where 1,000 computer-generated stuntmen filled the decks of the ship as it sank; in some shots, the ship itself was all digital. The film swept the 1997 Academy Awards, winning in nearly every major category, including Best Visual Effects.

model of the ship was constructed for filming with motion-control cameras and for compositing with computer-generated water, fog, smoke, passengers, and other elements, and some of the ship's interiors were created from miniatures, with actors digitally composited into them.

Yet the most innovative use of digital technology involved the creation of computer-generated stuntmen for the film's disaster sequences. During the sinking, for example, as the ship tilts end to end into the water, more than 1,000 falling figures were created via CGI, modeled on real stunt falls by means of a process called "roto capture," in which the motion-captured falls were scanned into a computer and used as templates to animate computer-generated mannequins. Similarly, scenes of crowds or of people strolling on deck were created through capturing and digitizing approximately thirty extras in real motion, then using it to animate computer-generated characters, sometimes as many as 500 per scene.

All told, there were more than 100 such shots in *Titanic*, some of which involved digital **face replacement** and/or the mixing of live and computer-generated characters. A computer-generated ship was used to facilitate placement of these elements, to previsualize camera movement, and to stand in for missing sections of live-action sets. (The CGI ship also appeared in three overhead shots of the *Titanic* at sea.) Although Digital Domain provided the vast majority of these, thirteen other companies worked at various points on the film, whose negative cost was reputedly in excess of $200 million. *Titanic* went on to become the most commercially successful film in the history of the cinema to that date, earning $601 million in the North American market alone.

Particle Animation, 1996–1997: *Twister*, *Independence Day*, and *Starship Troopers*

While Cameron's film was in production, a disaster film of a different sort made a seminal contribution to the development of photorealistic CGI. Warner Bros.' *Twister* (1996) was directed by Jan de Bont, a former cinematographer who had made an impressive debut in 1994 with the adrenaline-pumping chase film *Speed* (1994) for 20th Century–Fox. Preproduction planning called for *Twister*'s tornadoes to be computer-generated at ILM, and the design team had originated a new type of **particle-animation software** for the task, which played a major role not just in *Twister*, but in several contemporaneous landmarks in CGI, including Roland Emmerich's *Independence Day* (1996) for 20th Century–Fox and Paul Verhoeven's *Starship Troopers* (1997) for Touchstone Pictures.

Particle systems are a form of modeling known as "procedural animation," in which objects simulate the processes of natural growth, including elements of randomness, recursion, and accident. Typically,



The final dogfight between alien spaceships and F18s in *Independence Day* (Roland Emmerich, 1996) was created through particle-animation software that programmed hundreds of individual aircraft to fight a virtual battle. The film won the 1996 Oscar for Best Visual Effects.

particle systems will employ small points in 3-D space that are programmed with growth attributes and specific behavioral trajectories. Particle-animation software creates automated instructions for controlling the movement of large numbers of objects that cannot be animated individually in a cost-effective way. Because, in *Independence Day* (whose visual effects won a 1996 Oscar for VFX supervisor Douglas Smith), the massive dogfights between alien spaceships and F-18s contained hundreds of aircraft, to animate them individually would have been practically impossible. Instead, computer engineers programmed each type of craft with specific behavioral norms: spaceships and F-18s were given different speeds and weapons, and different objectives and capabilities, so that they would react automatically when they came within each other's range. In effect, the spacecraft and the aircraft were programmed to fight a virtual battle; when a craft was hit by weapons fire, the computer replaced its image with that of an explosion. Particle animation is a variant of this procedure, dealing with vast numbers of objects too numerous to animate in any other way.

The ILM software designed for *Twister* could not only isolate and animate individual particles within a larger whole, but could also program random patterns of chaos into the mix. The film ultimately contained 135 tornado and hailstorm shots generated by this software. Digital manipulation was also performed to replace a tanker-truck model destroyed by pyrotechnical effects for one spectacular, in-your-face shot of the truck careening toward the (virtual) camera lens.

Particle-animation software was similarly crucial to the production of *Starship Troopers*, which made several new advances on the digital frontier. The film is based on Robert A. Heinlein's 1959 novel about a war between earth and a race of gigantic intelligent bugs, and it features hundreds of shots of the insect armies swarming en masse during battle sequences. The bugs were created by Phil Tippett, the genius behind Go-Motion and many other innovations in animatronics who, while working with a hundred other digital artists at his Tippett Studios, designed six different insect types, all but one of which began life as drawings and sculpted maquettes. The exception was the tanker bug, which was created entirely in the digital domain.

Animation of individual bugs was accomplished either by digital artists or through the application of an improved DID, and **Dynamation** software was used to animate the swarms. Dynamation generated multiple dots to represent the swarming bugs, each with its own radius, direction, and speed, which were instructed to respond to variations in the live-action terrain and in their own movements relative to one another (so that, for example, they wouldn't run into rocks in compositing or into other bugs). The dots were digitally replaced with 3-D insects and animated against 3-D background plates of the setting, a task that ultimately required



For *Twister* (Jan de Bont, 1996), ILM used particle-animation software to randomize elements of the 135 digitally created tornado and hailstorm shots.

twenty-five to thirty hours of work per frame, so that a ten-second shot could take as long as three hundred hours to render completely.

Starship Troopers also featured computer-generated humans, both to multiply crowds and troop movements and to represent soldiers attacked and dismembered by bugs. In many such sequences, live action and model work were seamlessly cut together with CGI. One of the most complicated effects in the film, for example, involved the destruction of a tanker bug with a nuclear hand grenade; it called for protagonist Casper Van Dien to jump onto the beetle's back, gouge a hole in its shell, and drop the explosive into it. Part of the scene was constructed through close shots of live action on a model shell, but long and medium shots were computer-generated, as was the explosion. Most of *Starship Troopers*'s space battles were executed in miniature by 270 artists under the direction of Scott F. Anderson at Sony Pictures Imageworks (SPI) and composited with computer-generated spacescapes, which began as traditional 2-D matte paintings before being digitized in 3-D and computer-enhanced with a cloudlike nebula. In one particularly complex series of shots provided by Boss Film Studios, the battle cruiser *Rodger Young* is hit by a computer-generated plasma burst and splits in two. The combination of model and miniature work with live action and CGI in this sequence made it one of the most heavily composited to date, involving 125 separate layers of imagery, whose interaction required extensive previsualization. In addition to Tippett Studio, SPI, and Boss, ILM, Visual Concept Engineering (VCE), Compound Eye, and Banned from the Ranch Entertainment (BFTRE) also contributed to the 550-plus special-effects shots of *Starship Troopers*, and it became one of the most effects-intensive films in history, spending by some accounts as much as 50 percent of its $110 million negative cost to produce them.

Twister and *Starship Troopers* are watersheds in the history of CGI and the new kind of cinema it facilitates. In the other CGI landmarks discussed earlier, the special-effects sequences could have been accomplished by conventional means, and indeed, most were originally planned that way (e.g., animatronics were envisioned for *Jurassic Park*, mechanical puppets for *Casper*, etc.). In many cases, similar films had already been made using such effects: stop-motion dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures had roamed the earth from *The Lost World* (Harry O. Hoyt, 1925) through *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933) to *The Land That Time Forgot* (Kevin Connor, 1975); the Titanic had gone down before in *Titanic* (Jean Negulesco, 1953) and *A Night to Remember* (Roy Ward Baker, 1958), as had ships of more recent vintage in *The Last Voyage* (Andrew L. Stone, 1960) and *The Poseidon Adventure* (Ronald Neame, 1972); and actors had appeared in films with historical personages as if in newsreels or home movies, such as Charles Foster Kane

with Teddy Roosevelt, Mussolini, and Hitler in *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), and Zelig with a variety of famous people in *Zelig* (Woody Allen, 1983). Characters such as *Dragonheart*'s Draco had been attempted before, most notably in *Dragonslayer* (Matthew Robbins, 1981), with its Go-Motion dragon puppets, and *The NeverEnding Story* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1984), whose Falkor the "luckdragon" was also an animatronic puppet.

Yet *Twister* and *Starship Troopers* could not have been made without CGI, and digital-effects planning was present at the moment of their conception. In a quite literal sense, both films are *about* their effects—*Twister*'s funnel-shaped cyclones and *Starship Troopers*' armies of giant insects—neither of which could have been credibly produced through traditional effects (FX) technology.

Digital technology seems to work best when it gives concrete form to the imagined impossible, rather than attempting to replicate the real. Interestingly, though, classical cinema remains the paradigm for this new work—for example, Phil Tippett claimed *Zulu* (Cy Endfield, 1964) and *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (Tony Richardson, 1968) as his models for the bug attack on the Foreign Legion–like fort at Whiskey Outpost in *Starship Troopers*, and countless World War II combat films stand behind it as a whole, as do the populist propaganda epics of Frank Capra's Why We Fight series (1942–1944).

A New "New Hollywood," 1997–1998

As digital effects became an integral part of the Hollywood production process during the late 1990s, whole new crafts sprang up around the need for live-action and digital directors to work in separate spheres—animatics, for example, which is essentially the practice of creating moving storyboards. In animatics, computer-generated stick figures or line drawings representing special effects are composited with live-action footage and/or other elements to show how the effects will work in the final cut of the film.

Animatics have become an important part of the preproduction process, and not for effects sequences alone: in 1999, George Lucas employed the technology to previsualize every shot of *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace* with a 3-D animation program that established the placement of objects and characters on the set, as well as camera positions and movements. Recorded on digital videotape, these animatics were played back on the set before shooting, so that the cast and crew could anticipate the dynamics of each scene. This 3-D **previsualization** (or "previs") through animatics has become a normative part of preproduction for films that employ extensive digital effects, and there are several companies that specialize in it.

Another new craft that emerged with the rise of CGI was match moving, whereby the movement of the **virtual camera** is synched with that of the live-action camera, and computer-animated figures are correctly positioned within the live-action frame. (A virtual camera is implied in all 3-D animation; its "lens" is the point toward which all lines of perspective in the computer-generated image converge.) In effect, the process of match moving more or less inverts that of animatics in that it seeks to represent the live-action components of a production for combination with CGI: the match mover models all of the characters and the objects in the live-action environment as wireframes and lays them over live-action background plates as the first step in the postproduction integration of digital and real-time elements.

The wonder years for CGI in Hollywood were 1997 and 1998. In addition to *Titanic* and *Starship Troopers*, landmark films of 1997 included Universal's *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*, Gaumont's *The Fifth Element*, Warner Bros.' *Batman & Robin*, Columbia's *Men in Black*, and Fox's *Alien: Resurrection* and *The X Files* (1998). Of these, *The Lost World*, Spielberg's sequel to *Jurassic Park*, was especially important for its advances in **procedural animation**, used to create a group of stampeding dinosaurs, and for its refinement of the **Cari software** to provide realistic muscle reflexes and breathing motions for the dinosaurs. Because the computer-generated shots in *The Lost World* are longer and have more camera movement and live-action interface, postproduction required nearly ten months, as opposed to seven for *Jurassic Park*, and three times as many technical personnel; furthermore, whereas *Jurassic Park* had only fifty 3-D shots, *The Lost World* had ninety-one and another hundred 2-D digital effects involving wire removal, sky replacement, color correction, and other refinements.

The Batman series had been an innovator in digital effects from its second installment, *Batman Returns* (Tim Burton, 1992), when the transformation of the Batmobile from normal car to super-vehicle was accomplished through computer graphics. By the time of the third film, *Batman Forever* (Joel Schumacher, 1995), an all-digital Batman was being used for stunts,



Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace (George Lucas, 1999) was completely previsualized with computer-generated animatics and contained CGI in 70 percent of its shots.

and for *Batman & Robin* (Joel Schumacher, 1997), CGI was used to previsualize camera movement by running a virtual camera through wireframe models of the sets, as well as to plot the trajectories of miniature vehicles around miniature buildings and to extend the sets both horizontally and vertically.

A discussion of late-1990s CGI would not be complete without mentioning George Lucas's three Star Wars "Special Edition" reissues. Dissatisfied with certain predigital creature and animation effects in *Star Wars* (1977), *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), and *Return of the Jedi* (1983), Lucas re-released the trilogy with computer-generated enhancement, substituting digital for analog imagery and adding about five minutes to the running time, all at a cost of approximately $10 million (which also included color restoration and remastering the sound tracks for digital playback).

Although several of the digital extravaganzas of 1997 lost money, most made a good profit, and three entered the ranks of the highest-grossing films of all time: *Titanic* ($601 million), *Men in Black* ($250 million), and *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* ($229 million). Not insignificantly, the reissued *Star Wars* became the fourth-highest-grossing film of 1997 with $138 million, and more to the point, set the public up for Lucas's 1999 *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace*, 70 percent of whose shots contained CGI.

Despite the novelty and success of many CGI-enhanced Hollywood films, the public's appetite for such entertainment wasn't insatiable. Roland Emmerich's *Godzilla* (Sony/TriStar), for example, was produced by the director's Centropolis Film Productions at a cost of $125 million and, despite great expectations and heavy marketing by Sony Pictures Entertainment, returned only a modest $136 million. *Alien: Resurrection* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 1997) relied so heavily on computer graphics for its 205 visual-effects shots that it cost 50 percent more than any previous Alien films ($70 million) and became the first film in the franchise to lose money, effectively ending it. The worst FX disaster of 1998, however, was another science-fiction film, *Sphere* (Barry Levinson), set 2,000 feet underwater, where U.S. government scientists are sent to investigate a submerged alien spacecraft.

On the basis of extensive previsualization by effects supervisor Jeffrey A. Okun and Carlos Arguello of Cinesite Hollywood, Warners decided that *Sphere* was too expensive to make as planned, so they shut production down while it was reconceptualized. Rerigged, *Sphere* relied heavily on CGI to simulate its underwater environment, as well as to provide key elements in sequences such as the initial submarine descent and a mass attack by jellyfish, economies that enabled the film to be brought in for $80 million. Yet nothing could save it from its broken-backed structure and clumsy script, and it returned less than half of its negative cost at the box office to become one of 1998's biggest commercial failures.

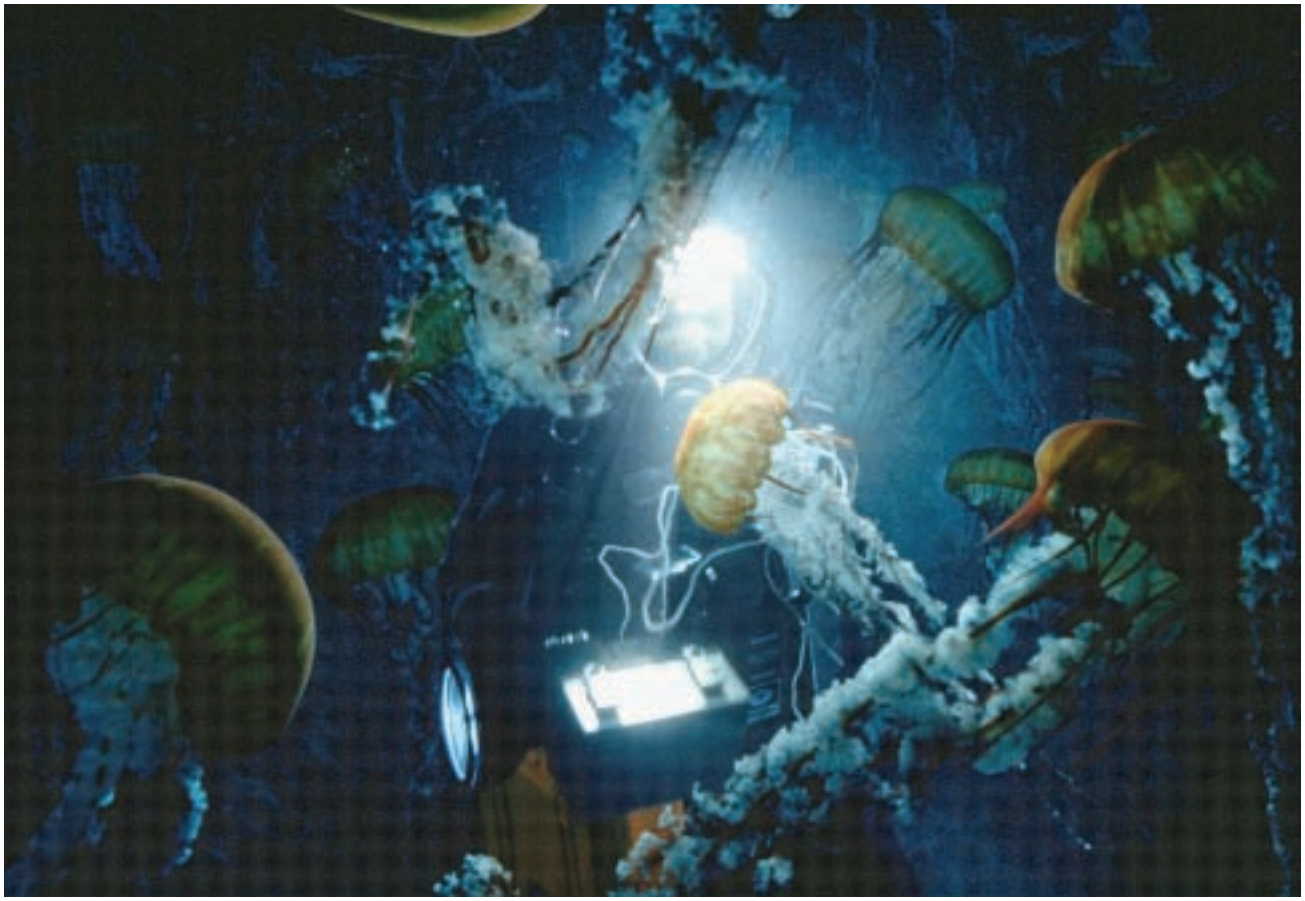
Disney's $49 million *Mighty Joe Young* (Ron Underwood) was also targeted for young audiences and experienced a similar fate. A remake of Ernest B. Schoedsack's 1949 classic (itself a kind of sequel to

King Kong), *Mighty Joe Young*'s digital effects were provided by Disney-owned Dream Quest Images, which designed new **hair-simulation software** and new software to animate the giant ape's face and create realistic musculature, but the film failed with the public, grossing just $50.6 million to barely break even.

Although it seemed clear by the summer of 1998 that the mass appeal of CGI was fading, Disney was more successful with Touchstone Pictures' disaster epic *Armageddon*, directed by Michael Bay. Produced at the record-breaking cost (for Disney) of $174 million, it used spectacular digital and pyrotechnic effects produced by Digital Domain and fourteen other effects companies to tell a tale about an asteroid the size of Texas on a collision course with Earth. Despite an expensive promotion campaign, *Armageddon* was a major disappointment for Disney, even though its $202 million take made it the highest-grossing film of 1998.

Another influential film of the late 1990s was the Wachowski siblings' *The Matrix* (1999) for Warner Bros., whose success was the result of its intriguing philosophical premise and mind-bending narrative, as well as its eye-catching martial-arts effects, which were heavily assisted by computer graphics. *The Matrix* pioneered the technique called "Flow-Mo," or **"bullet time" photography**, which makes it possible for filmmakers to change the speed of moving objects in progress.

In this process, an actual movement is filmed and scanned into a computer to create a wireframe of the person or the object, from which its trajectory is mapped. Then a battery of still cameras is placed along this path, and the movement is photographed again as a series of sequential stills. These are scanned into the computer, which arranges them in the manner of a film strip, so that they can be digitally manipulated to reproduce the movement at varying speeds—a return to the practice of Eadweard Muybridge in the digital age. These and other computer-graphic techniques lent a unique look to *The Matrix*, whose balletic



Sphere (Barry Levinson, 1998) relied heavily on CGI to simulate its underwater environment as well as to provide key elements in sequences like the initial submarine descent and a mass attack by jellyfish.



The Matrix (Andy and Lana Wachowski, 1999) used "Flo-Mo," or "bullet-time" photography, to digitally manipulate the speed of moving objects and bodies.

martial-arts and gun battles were already passé in the Hong Kong cinema from which they were lifted by the Wachowski siblings very nearly intact; the film was another sleeper, however, grossing $171 million against a negative cost of $63 million.

The Digital Manipulation of Color

The major CGI event of 1999 was 20th Century–Fox's release of George Lucas's *Star Wars* prequel *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace*, which contained more than sixty computer-generated characters (including a major one, Jar Jar Binks, who appeared in about 350 shots) and roughly 2,200 visual effects produced at ILM. Approximately 70 percent of the film was composited with CGI, and 100 percent of it was previsualized with animatics, making *The Phantom Menace* a film that could not have come into being without computer graphics. It cost $115 million to produce and grossed $432 million domestically to become the third-highest-earning film of all time, demonstrating definitively (and, by this point, needlessly) that the future of motion pictures was digital.

After the late 1990s, however, audiences turned their attention away from mere spectacle and back toward story and character. CGI was now a fact of life in Hollywood, and many films took advantage of (or pioneered) it in production, but no longer were audiences thrilled *only* by the presentation of spectacular effects. Effects became an element in service of the long-standing storytelling function of cinema, rather than the main attraction. For example, New Line Cinema's *Pleasantville*, directed by Gary Ross, is about two teenagers from the late 1990s who suddenly find themselves transported into the sanitized and lobotomized world of a 1950s-style TV sitcom ("Pleasantville"). To convey the unreality and colorlessness of this world, the filmmakers used new **color-correction technology** to turn color-film images into black and white (a transition that is also medium-specific, because television images during the 1950s were broadcast in black and white). As the teenagers gradually begin to humanize "Pleasantville," color comes to it selectively and literally, as color returns selectively to the black-and-white portion of the film. In standard color-correction technology, film images are scanned into a computer, digitally changed to black and white (or vice versa), and then scanned back out onto film, a process that normally takes ten to thirty seconds, depending on image content. To perform the high-volume work

of scanning approximately hundred minutes (some 163,000 frames) of a hundred-and-twenty-minute film, *Pleasantville* producers used the Philips Spirit DataCine at Cinesite Digital Imaging in Los Angeles, a new kind of **telecine** device developed in Europe that transfers film to digital files and digital files to videotape at 2,000 lines of resolution for editing at the speed of 4 fps (2K resolution is the minimum standard for the conversion of film images to digital video without significant loss of definition; 4K is ideal but was impractical at the time in terms of digital storage capacities). The filmmakers incorporated their own company, Pleasantville Effects, to supervise **color timing** during the conversion of the original negative into data files.

Two years later, DP Roger Deakins would use the same DataCine technology at Cinesite to desaturate and fine-tune the color palette of the Coen brothers' *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000) for Buena Vista, shot on location in Mississippi, both to give it a period look and to compensate for the intensity of greens in the lushly forested shooting environment. After considering several proprietary bleach-bypass processes, Deakins and the Coens decided to use the same **digital intermediate process** as in *Pleasantville*, because it allowed them to manipulate the film's color selectively. In color-correction procedures, as in so many other areas of filmmaking, digitization has led to increased artistic control.

Digital manipulation of color in motion pictures began on a large scale in 1985, when Ted Turner set out to "colorize" studio-era black-and-white films that he had acquired during his brief ownership of MGM/UA. The practice was controversial at the time because, among other things, it skewed the intentions



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(right) [1] The digital intermediate process (DI), also known as digital film mastering, refers to the process of scanning and color correcting an entire feature film on the computer. Kodak's Cinesite Digital Imaging became the first Hollywood-based facility to perform such a scan when it digitized approximately hundred minutes of *Pleasantville* (Gary Ross, 1998), whose interpenetration of black-and-white and color imagery was central to the story concept. [2] DI and new image-based animation software were used to create the "Painted World" sequences in *What Dreams May Come* (Vincent Ward, 1998), combining live actors with digitally created sets modeled on the style and actual works of nineteenth-century painters. [3] The first digitally mastered film to attract widespread attention was *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (Joel Coen and Ethan Coen, 2000), for which the Coen brothers wanted the look of old hand-tinted postcards—"a dry, dusty Delta look with golden sunsets," according to DP Roger Deakins. [4] *Red Planet* (Antony Hoffman, 2000) used digital color correction to produce the reddish-orange glow of the Mars surface.

of the original filmmakers and distorted film history. Yet **colorization** also created excitement among filmmakers about the artistic possibilities of selectively manipulating color, and by the mid-1990s, they had begun to experiment with a variety of ways to exercise this new form of control over the film image, including, of course, the digital intermediate process described previously, but also several types of **silver-retention** and **bleach-bypass** processes done in the lab. Although these latter processes are photochemical, rather than digital, they represent attempts to imitate, in an optical environment, the creative license of computer graphics and are worth noting here. Modern color film stocks are **low-grain, high-contrast,** and color-saturated, qualities that work together to produce sharp, clean images. Yet directors and cinematographers frequently want more grain and less saturation to achieve a certain effect or to



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[1] For *Se7en* (David Fincher, 1995), DP Darius Khondji used a Deluxe silver-retention process called CCE to produce a darker, thicker negative that increased film grain, desaturated color, and rendered blacker blacks, creating the gloomy, menacing look of the film. [2] For *Sleepy Hollow* (Tim Burton, 1999), DP Emmanuel Lubezki chose the same CCE process for this horror fantasy to evoke the black-and-white cinematography of Mario Bava's *Black Sunday* (1960) in a Gothic mise-en-scéne, recalling Hammer's lurid Eastmancolor horror films of the same period. [3] For *Pitch Black* (David Twohy, 2000), DP David Eggby used bleach-bypass silver-retention technology to represent the washed-out quality of light on a planet with three suns. [4] For *Traffic* (Steven Soderbergh, 2000), DP Soderbergh (credited as Peter Andrews) used bleach-bypass to give a raw, dusty immediacy to its Mexican sequences. [5] For *Lost Souls* (Janusz Kaminski, 2000), DP Mauro Fiore used bleach-bypass to create a sense of spiritual dryness to this theological horror film. [6] For *The Thirteenth Floor* (Josef Rusnak, 1999), DP Wedigo von Schultzendorff shot the sequences set in Los Angeles circa 1937 on color stock and the negative processed to create both color and black-and-white interpositives from which a percentage of each was extracted and combined in the final printing to create a sort of "black and white in color."

correct for prevailing qualities of light and/or color inherent in certain kinds of locations (as in the previous example of *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*).

Color negative stock consists of three layers, each of which is sensitive to certain colors of the spectrum—red, green, and blue. Developing color negatives is a multistep process that involves sending the film through three separate chemical baths, the first of which develops the **latent images** as black and white or **silver halide** on all three layers. The next step is **dye coupling**, in which each of the three layers is infused with color, which is co-present with the black-and-white, silver-halide images. The third step is bleaching, whereby the silver halide is washed away, leaving a fully developed color negative. Silver-retention, bleach-bypass (or skip-bleach), and proprietary processes such as Technicolor's ENR either skip or degrade the bleaching process, which has the effect of increasing contrast and grain, desaturating the color, and producing blacker blacks.

This was the look that director David Fincher and his DP Darius Khondji wanted for their dark murder mystery *Se7en* (1995), produced for New Line Cinema, which was processed using a Deluxe silver-retention process called Color Contrast Enhancement (CCE). This same process was chosen by Tim Burton and DP Emmanuel Lubezki for the horror-fantasy *Sleepy Hollow* (1999), made for Paramount, to give it the combined ambience of a Hammer horror film and Mario Bava's *Black Sunday* (1960). For the science-fiction thriller *Pitch Black* (2000), produced for USA Films, director David Twohy and DP David Eggby employed a skip-bleach process on the original camera negative of exteriors shot in the Australian desert to represent the washed-out quality of daylight on a planet with three suns.

A different approach to color manipulation was taken by director Josef Rusnak and DP Wedigo von Schultzendorff in *The Thirteenth Floor* (1999), made for Columbia Pictures, much of which takes place within the confines of an elaborate virtual-reality game set in Los Angeles circa 1937, brilliantly re-created by compositing surviving architecture with CGI from Centropolis Effects LLC. To give the Los Angeles sequences the look of an old postcard, the film was shot on color stock and the negative processed to create both color and black-and-white **interpositives**; in the final printing process, a percentage of each was extracted and combined (after some experiment) in a ratio of 60 percent color to 40 percent black and white, producing an image with the appropriate retro color palette.

Bread and Circuses

Since the 1970s, rising production costs had virtually eliminated the period epic as a genre. Sweeping spectacles such as MGM's *Ben-Hur* (William Wyler, 1959) and Universal International's *Spartacus* (Stanley Kubrick, 1960) that had been shot on location with vast crowds of extras were unthinkable at a time when the average production cost per class-A feature had risen to $75 million, as it had by 1999. The last historical epic as such produced by a major studio was probably Warner Bros.' *Barry Lyndon* (Stanley Kubrick, 1975), whose $11 million cost had raised eyebrows when the film failed at the box office, but when Michael Cimino's sprawling $44 million Western *Heaven's Gate* (1980) earned less than $2 million and forced the sale of United Artists by Transamerica to MGM, historical films became anathema in the industry for the next two decades. By the end of the century, however, CGI offered a new way to mount historical spectacles without having to resort to elaborate sets, extensive location shooting, and/or multitudes of extras.

Digital effects were part of Ridley Scott's original plans for DreamWorks SKG's *Gladiator* (2000) from the moment of conception. To achieve a look inspired by nineteenth-century British and French Romantic painters and such monumental German films as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926) and Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1936), Scott employed production designer Arthur Max and decided to go with a single effects house, Mill Film Ltd., a British company that had worked with him on *G.I. Jane* (1997).

In more than a hundred digital-effects shots, Mill would create digital matte paintings of ancient Rome, multiply human figures for crowd scenes, and help create battle sequences too dangerous to shoot as live action. For example, for the opening battle sequence between the Roman army and German barbarians (set in Germania, but actually shot in Surrey, outside of London), Mill created sweeping views of the opposing forces by **tiling** together still photographic plates of limited numbers of costumed extras, representing just a small fraction of the actual numbers involved. In this way, Scott was able to use about 1,500 soldiers to represent 10,000.

Furthermore, a major component of this battle involved the Romans shooting flaming arrows and flinging flaming pitch pots from catapults at the Germans, both quite dangerous in live-action terms. To accomplish the effect, real arrows and pitch pots were fired

into the air toward safe areas, and the pinnacles of their arcs became the starting points for digital trajectory extensions, complete with computer-generated smoke trails. Other digital effects in the film involved the construction of partial and, in some cases, entire buildings.

The Roman Colosseum, seen later in the film, was a partial, 52-foot-tall set built in Malta and completed via CGI, which added a complete middle and upper deck to the structure and masses of spectators: specifically, 27,000 extras were created for the Colosseum crowd by procedural animation, as were digital chariots and gladiators in long shot. The much-remarked aerial shot of the Colosseum, taken as if from a blimp at a contemporary sporting event, was also digitally created.

Rome itself evolved in postproduction as a combination of digital matte painting, digitized photographs, and computer-graphic models. On Scott's initiative, some of the Roman exterior shots were made deliberately evocative of *Metropolis* and *Triumph of the Will*: for example, a mass scene in which Commodus reviews his troops resembles a Nazi Party rally, complete with standards and regalia. According to visual-effects supervisor John Nelson, the scale and grouping reference for this scene was the Riefenstahl film, and the footage was desaturated in the color-correction process so that it would resemble old newsreels. These are just a few of the digital enhancements in a film that was as CGI-based as any science-fiction or fantasy film.

Because *Gladiator* was made on an extremely tight production schedule, numerous labor-saving devices were adopted in postproduction to accomplish its effects quickly and efficiently. One of the most innovative expediencies involved the use of WAM!-NET's compressed digital-video–delivery service, which allowed the transfer of huge CGI data files back and forth from





Russell Crowe in one of the few built sets of *Gladiator* (Ridley Scott, 2000): the first level of the Roman Colosseum. The middle and upper decks were entirely CGI produced at Mill Film Ltd., London, which also created masses of spectators through procedural animation.

Mill Film in London to its American outpost in Los Angeles and ultimately to *Gladiator*'s online edit suite in Hollywood. This enabled the British and American units to take advantage of the time difference to maximize their work day, so that visual-effects production for *Gladiator* could go on literally around the clock.

Ridley Scott's ability to marshal such resources places him, with Paul Verhoeven, Roland Emmerich, Wolfgang Petersen, and Michael Bay, in the first rank of practitioners of a new aesthetic—one that demands the full integration of CGI and live action at the preproduction stage, carries production forth on both of those levels simultaneously, and performs a creative synthesis of the two in postproduction, which now assumes a role equal in importance to production in the filmmaking process. This is not, by any means, to exclude the originators of the form—James Cameron, Robert Zemeckis, Steven Spielberg, and George Lucas whose Industrial Light & Magic looms so large in this account—nor to sideline the occasionally brilliant contributor, such as Vincent Ward, Brian De Palma, Baz Luhrmann, and Peter Jackson. (Nor is it to say that the first-named directors always, or even primarily, make important films.) It is simply to say that they now look to CGI as a fundamental building block of their work—not as a "special" effect, but as a normative one; not as an enhancement or a refinement, but as the very stuff of the medium.

(left) Joaquin Phoenix is backed and flanked by an entirely digital Rome in *Gladiator* (Ridley Scott, 2000).

To make a film such as *Gladiator* without CGI could easily have tripled its cost. In any event, its budget of $103 million was amortized within three weeks of release in May 2000, and it eventually grossed $188 million. It was in some sense a serious film—serious enough, at least, to be nominated for twelve Academy Awards and receive four—as well as a successful one. No one would argue that *Gladiator* is a masterpiece, but it is an aesthetically pleasing genre film that made expert use of CGI to achieve production economies and, at the same time, to offer its audience a high level of representational credibility.

Millennial Visions

For Wolfgang Petersen's *The Perfect Storm* (2000), produced for Warner Bros., the challenge was to come up with a credible computer-generated rendition of a storm at sea, historically one of Hollywood's least convincing areas of representation. The assignment was given to visual-effects supervisor Stefen Fangmeier and special-effects supervisor John Frazier at ILM, the same team that had produced the tornadoes of *Twister* in 1996. The difference between the two films, however, indicated how rapidly the state of CGI had advanced in just four years: whereas in *Twister* the tornadoes were computer-generated elements to be integrated into a live-action environment, in *The Perfect Storm*, the human characters and their boats were integrated into the total environment of a computer-generated storm.

Development of software tools to create the storm began eighteen months before the film's projected release. Procedural physical simulation was used to produce hundreds and hundreds of swells in the so-called bottom water, while layer upon layer of particle systems generated the choppy, misty surface of the "top water." In the end, the storm's level of detail was extremely high, requiring months and months to render and producing huge digital files. Like *Twister*, *The Perfect Storm* was a huge popular success, earning $327 million worldwide.



The cartoonlike quality of the all-digital werewolves in *An American Werewolf in Paris* (Anthony Waller, 1997) illustrates a lack of volumetric displacement common to computer-generated characters when, usually for reasons of budget, they are not carefully rendered.

Other CGI-intensive films released in 2000 and 2001 demonstrated just how widespread the use of digital effects had become. The cost of run-of-the-mill CGI had dropped so low that even exploitation producers could afford to use it. Columbia's $35 million *Anaconda* (Luis Llosa) grossed twice its negative costs in 1997, propelled by the novelty of a computer-generated title character that swallowed actors whole. During the next few years, there was a proliferation of digital reptiles in films whose budgets seemed skewed toward the production of a single, monstrous CGI effect (comparable to the 1950s monster films, in which the centerpiece was a Ray Harryhausen stop-motion effect).

In fact, low- to medium-budget horror films were among the first to use CGI as a means of containing costs. Hollywood Pictures' *An American Werewolf in Paris* (Anthony Waller, 1997) was an innovator here as an independent low-budget ($22 million) production, giving Santa Barbara Studios its first character animation assignment—to create fifty shots' worth of 7-foot-tall, 700-pound digital werewolves that could walk on two legs or all fours and appear in close-ups, as well as in long and medium shots.

As usual, the biggest difficulty for the artists was computer-generated fur, and they finally opted to create individual geometry for every single hair, which numbered more than 360,000 per werewolf model. For the viewer, however, the biggest problem in the finished product is the werewolves' apparent lack of volume (which is also, of course, an *actual* lack of volume). All images in the cinema are two-dimensional representations of three-dimensional space—the screen is flat, although the scenographic space it represents exists in the round—but characters and objects within that scenographic space displace volume relative to one another and to their surroundings. Computer-generated characters cannot displace volume because they have none, so the illusion of displacement has to be created through lighting and shading at the rendering stage, a time-consuming and expensive process. This lack of volumetric displacement can often be detected in the digital effects of low- to medium-budget American genre films of the 1990s—horror films such as *Phantoms* (Joe Chappelle, 1989) and *Deep Rising* (Stephen Sommers, 1998), where the monsters are entirely generated by computer; it can also be seen in many Hong Kong genre films of the same period, where low-resolution CGI was often the cheapest and easiest way to render sets and locations on a tight production schedule.

Low-end use of CGI to achieve production economies is now common in the American industry, where

it is used for stunt wire and harness removal, sky enhancement and replacement, color and lighting correction from shot to shot, and correction of a multitude of other production errors and/or omissions. These procedures are not cheap, but they are usually priced below retakes and other means of correction. For example, Ang Lee used sky replacement and digital rain for several sequences in his modestly budgeted ($16.5 million) Jane Austen adaptation *Sense and Sensibility* (1995) to cope with the vagaries of shooting on location in English weather.

In another example, Roman Polanski and DP Darius Khondji were shooting a scene for their neo-Gothic horror film *The Ninth Gate* (1999) inside a Paris café, when they inadvertently photographed some passersby gawking through the window. Rather than throw out the shot, Polanski was able to remove this unwanted element in digital postproduction by replacing the real background with a 3-D photograph of an empty street and avoid overextending his tight $38 million budget.

In a variant of this practice, digitized 3-D still photographs of Beijing provided a very credible backdrop for the opening sequence of Jon Avnet's political thriller *Red Corner* (1997), at a time when shooting on location there would have been impossible, even if there had been a budget for it. In the $25 million independent feature *Elizabeth* (1998), director Shekhar Kapur created the queen's coronation sequence by digitally multiplying a small crowd of spectators into a multitude and compositing it into the digitally enhanced nave of a real cathedral, a practice increasingly common in low- to medium-budget films, because it saves on the cost of extras, costumes, and the logistics of a real location shoot. Occasionally, CGI will be used to create the total environment of a film, as in Phillip Noyce's police procedural *The Bone Collector* (1999), which was shot primarily on a bluescreen stage in Montreal and composited with second-unit photography of the streets of Manhattan, where the drama supposedly takes place.

CGI can also add photorealistic components to a scene that might be too expensive, difficult, or dangerous to achieve in real time and space. This can be something as simple as adding a bullet hole to a door to maintain continuity, as in Neil LaBute's *Nurse Betty* (2000), or as crucial as the doomed school bus that motivates Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter* (1997) as it sinks into the ice in long shot. To save on both insurance costs and logistics, weapons fire is frequently computer-generated, so that no firearms need be discharged on the set.

Similarly, as digital artists have become expert at rendering fire and flame, computer-generated pyrotechnics have increasingly replaced, or been combined with, real pyrotechnics, so that costly sets (and lives) will not be touched by flames. (Digital pyrotechnics are often accompanied by digital lens distortion to make it appear as if they were filmed through the heat wave produced by real fire.) Following the same logic, the producers of *Dracula 2000* (Patrick Lussier, 2000) decided to create a casket full of leeches digitally to save on valuable production time and avoid dealing with the notoriously prickly American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), which monitors all Hollywood productions employing animals and insects and demands an individual accounting of them at the end of each shooting day.

A New Aesthetic for a New Century

Whereas Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), made for 20th Century–Fox, had been filmed mainly on location and used CGI sparingly for sky replacement and set extensions, Luhrmann and DP Don McAlpine shot most of *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) for Fox on a soundstage, where they could control lighting and choreography, and relied on digital effects to create exterior views of Paris and the Montmartre cabaret of the title, as well as to enhance production numbers. Luhrmann wanted his effects to evoke the flamboyant theatricality of fin-de-siècle Paris, whose visual currency was Art Nouveau, and the look of early filmmakers such as the Lumières and Georges Méliès, who were practicing in Paris at the time. The former yielded what VFX supervisor Chris Godfrey called "the postcard effect," whereby computer-generated 2-D images would morph into 3-D images and then live action; the early-cinema look was produced in postproduction by lowering contrast, tinting the image in various tones of sepia, and adding grain, splice marks, and flicker. Fifteen scenes, many of them elaborately stylized musical performances, would blend live action with elaborate motion-control model photography and 3-D CGI.

David Dozoretz's Persistence of Vision (POV) company was called in to previsualize these scenes with animatics, because they involved complicated virtual camera moves. For example, the film's opening shot



Nicole Kidman and Ewan McGregor in *Moulin Rouge!* (Baz Luhrmann, 2001).

involves a three-mile, wide-angle track across Paris, with the camera finally diving into a street that leads to the gates of Montmartre and then flying up through the hero's garret window. Later, another shot reverses this movement, as the camera snaps back from the interior of the garret into a wide-angle view of the city, then darts into a computer-generated version of the train station Gare du Nord, rendered via "the postcard effect" with added radiosity (in which light bounces off each surface of a model) to heighten its hyperreal feel. Lurhmann's unique blend of the bohemian sensibility of turn-of-the-century Paris and the high technology of early-twenty-first-century Hollywood was exceeded only by Peter Jackson's creation of an entire mythographic world in his The Lord of the Rings trilogy for New Line Cinema: *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), *The Two Towers* (2002), and *The Return of the King* (2003).

All three Lord of the Rings films were shot on location in New Zealand simultaneously, and the numbers alone are staggering: 350 studio and location sets; 15,000 pieces of clothing; 10,000 facial appliances; 1,800 suits of body prosthetics and 1,800 Hobbit feet; at least 1,500 digital-effects shots; and a budget estimated at about $270 million spread over three films. The effects produced by his team mix live action, miniature shots, motion-control camerawork, digital matte painting, digitally enhanced miniatures, and completely digital environments.

From the outset, Jackson strove to avoid the "perfection" associated with CGI and to create a Middle Earth that might have been shot on real locations. To this end, he avoided the trend toward blending 3-D computer-generated environments with digital matte paintings so clearly present in *Moulin Rouge!* and created much of Middle Earth photographically, with only a few characters, such as Gollum and the Balrog, generated entirely in the digital realm.

For The Lord of the Rings series a software program called Massive was developed by Stephen Regelous that took the concept of procedural animation to a new level. Simply put, this program uses motion capture to create behavior cycles that can be multiplied into elaborate battle sequences involving tens of thousands of Orcs and Gondorians. The

(right) Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (Peter Jackson, 2003); voiced and performed for motion capture by Andy Serkis.



complex library of movements that Massive provides for each type of figure is actually an order of artificial intelligence, in which programmers build the "brains" of Orcs or Gondorians by giving them modules of vision and hearing, as well as physical descriptors such as height, weight, and speed, to instruct how they will move and act.

The Fellowship of the Ring contained about 450 visual-effects shots, ranging from digital face replacement through compositing miniatures with live-action and digital characters, to the Massive all-digital battle sequence described previously. The negative was then digitally graded at a purpose-built facility. As Peter Jackson remarked to *American Cinematographer*, "Digital grading allows you to apply a remarkable layer of creativity to the film after you've shot it. Andrew [Lesnie, DP] and I didn't want anything to feel artificial; we wanted to make the film feel like a 'real fairy tale' [by giving it] a slightly fantastic feel, while also making it feel real." A fusion of the fantastic and the real is exactly what they have achieved: armies of artificially intelligent Orcs fighting armies of artificially intelligent Gondorians on their own recognizance, while digital animators stand idly by—they can hardly be described in any other way.

Digital 3-D

Today, the use of CGI has become as common in theatrical features and video commercials as the Steadicam. A newer development is the advent of digital 3-D, both in theaters and in the home. The smashing worldwide success of James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009), the highest-grossing film of all time—one that *Los Angeles Times* critic Kenneth Turan called "the *Jazz Singer* of 3-D movies"—caused a stampede of Hollywood producers rushing either to convert existing 2-D films into the new digital 3-D format or to conceptualize and create digital 3-D films from start to finish. Digital 3-D works on the same anaglyphic principle as Arch Obler's 35mm Natural Vision process—*Bwana Devil* (Obler, 1952), *Kiss Me Kate* (George Sidney, 1953), *The Charge at Feather River* (Gordon Douglas, 1953), and many others—which required two perfectly synchronized 35mm cameras and projectors and disposable cardboard glasses outfitted with Edward Land's newly perfected polarized lenses, a clumsy and expensive way to produce a relatively unsatisfying illusion of three-dimensionality on a two-dimensional screen.

Digital 3-D works in a similar fashion, except that it tricks the eye into seeing artificial depth in a much more sophisticated and satisfying way. It's common for people to equate 3-D with the way we actually "see" reality in empirical terms (thus, "Natural" Vision), yet in fact, that's not strictly true. What really happens is that our left and right eyes see two different 2-D images, and our brain calculates the difference between them as depth. This is basically how all 3-D systems work. Like late-nineteenth-century stereopticon slides, digital 3-D fools our brains into believing that something is either closer or farther away than it really is. Older 3-D systems tended to reproduce depth as an echeloned series of dimensionally flat planes, whereas today's digital systems add the effect of volumetric figures occupying real space, creating a kind of "aesthetics of immersion."

The distinction between a 2-D film converted to digital 3-D and one originally conceived for stereoscopic viewing is that the former has no depth cues from the moment of acquisition. It is not authored in 3-D and can therefore be a very unsatisfying experience for an audience in a theater. The most important distinction between the two, so far, lies in the flexibility of the Cameron Pace Fusion 3-D camera, whose presence is a guarantee that the film is not a 2-D conversion. Yet in movies such as Rob Minkoff's *The Lion King* (1994) for Disney and Cameron's *Titanic* (1997) for Paramount, where the conversion is being done by the film's original author, and where the depth cues are manifest because of the subjective nature of the process, the conversions can be just as satisfying as films scripted and storyboarded for 3-D.

Unlike the polarized red/blue disposable cardboard glasses of the early 1950s, digital 3-D uses two kinds of glasses: Active "shutter" glasses with LCD lenses are wirelessly synchronized to the theatrical film or the TV. When the image intended for the left eye is shown, the lens for the right eye goes dark, and vice versa. These glasses are heavy and expensive, but they create the most solid kind of 3-D effect. The second type, passive shutter glasses, used in most 3-D theatrical screenings, employ polarized lenses, just as sunglasses do, and are brighter and cheaper than active shutter glasses. Each eye's respective image is filtered in such a way that the lens for the opposite eye blocks it from view. One big drawback for both systems—and indeed for all 3-D systems, going all the way back to Natural Vision—is that audiences hate wearing the glasses. (Needless to say, the development of a glasses-less 3-D system is one of the holy grails of contemporary moviemaking.)



Avatar (James Cameron, 2009).

In the late 1990s, IMAX systems became the first commercial venue to use a new, and easy-to-operate, technology, developed by the California company RealD, that employs a single digital projector to flash both left- and right-eye images on the screen. IMAX 3-D films such as *Wings of Courage* (1995), together with liquid crystal shutter glasses, produced the spectacular illusion of 3-D on a towering screen. A wave of such IMAX films was soon followed by James Cameron's hour-long documentary on the exploration of the Titanic wreckage, *Ghosts of the Abyss* (2003), and Robert Zemeckis's digitally animated *The Polar Express* (2004), which became the first feature film to use the process. Following this trend, the first 35mm digital 3-D films tended to be animated ones, such as DreamWorks's *Monsters vs. Aliens* (Conrad Vernon, 2009), Touchstone's *The Nightmare Before Christmas 3-D* (Henry Selick, 2009), and Disney/Pixar's *Cars 2* (Brad Lewis, 2011).

Animated films are a natural format for 3-D, because they already rely on ray-tracing software and volumetric distortion to create an illusion of three-dimensionality, and in 2009, DreamWorks vowed to release every film it made after *Monsters* in 3-D. Yet once the novelty of the process had worn off and audiences began to tire of animated fare, the link between 3-D animation and live-action 3-D was provided by James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009), in which human figures were composited in with 3-D CGI imagery to create a mythological fantasy world that is neither here nor there.

It was clear, however, that things were about to change in 2011, when the three godfathers of American cinema (Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, and Francis Ford Coppola) all announced that they would make their next films in digital 3-D, as did Ang Lee (*Life of Pi* [2012]) and Ridley Scott (*Prometheus* [2012]), whose experience in working with 3-D was so profound that he said he would never work without it again, "even for small dialogue sequences"—an impression that was borne out by Australian director Baz Luhrmann's decision to shoot his adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (2013) in 3-D.

As Martin Scorsese points out, when color was introduced in the 1930s, "it was looked upon as a selling point but not for serious films. This is true: it took years for color to become the industry standard." He continues, "There really is no reason why, for lack of a better phrase, 'serious films' couldn't be done in 3-D. . . . [T]here is really no reason for it except for technical limitations. As far as audience acceptance is concerned, it's just a



Suraj Sharma in *Life of Pi* (Ang Lee, 2012).

matter of time until things get a little more easy in terms of glasses versus no glasses and other issues." That time had apparently come by mid-2015, when RealD pushed its screen count past 27,000, up 6 percent from the year before, and IMAX approached 1,000 screens.

The Digital Future

During most of their history, movies have changed very little in the way they are made and projected in theaters. Of course, there were changes in screen formats, sound, color, and editing protocols, but the images themselves were still captured on film. The raw footage would then be spliced together to create a master negative. That negative was used to make a positive print (the "interpositive") to check the final work, or to dupe positive prints for distribution. This meant that by the time the print reached the theater, it might be three optical generations removed from the original negative, with an attendant loss in detail, color, and so forth, through contact with the chemical dyes that were used to develop it. The print would then be shown on a mechanical projector, essentially no different in principle than Edison's Vitascope, which might or might not be properly maintained enough to align each frame at the gate and then proceed at the right speed through the projector to provide a stable, jitter-free image. Even then, only the first audiences get to see the print in its freshest form, because with each screening the print will pick up obvious dirt, emulsion lines, and scratches. When these prints are released to the secondary and tertiary markets, they are banged up to a degree that would make them unacceptable in a first-run venue.

Digital cinema changed all of this. With digital capture, a filmmaker can shoot thousands of hours of raw footage daily and completely eliminate the cost of developing dailies, allowing a director to check a shot on the spot, before moving on to the next one. Digital capture accelerates the blending of CGI and photographic images, because both originate in the digital domain. When we see a digitally captured movie with a digital projector, we will always see an exact replica or "clone" of what the director wanted us to see, without generational loss or print wear. And most critical, from the producers' point of view, digital projection eliminates the need for bulky film prints, which cost at least $2,000 each to make and distribute. Every aspect of this

new digital terrain can save millions of dollars for the studios (and is environmentally sound as well).

These benefits for image-capture, postproduction, and exhibition are undeniable. What has been a subject of debate, however, is whether digital technology can ever replace modern film stock, which is an ultra-high-resolution medium that can represent anything from the deepest blacks to the brightest highlights and has a hundred-year, highly evolved history of use. Most digital films shot today use 2K systems (e.g., *Slumdog Millionaire*, 2008). Yet the recent advent of 4K digital cameras (plus the rapid penetration of digital projection into theaters, bankrolled by the studios) has ushered in a new digital medium that produces rich and deep blacks and brilliant highlights, and exceeds the level of detail provided by contemporary film stocks.

Obviously, the full potential and the practical implications of digital technology for the filmmaking process are yet to be fully realized. To name just one, for the last hundred years of film history—before theatrical 3-D, that is—a director working in three-dimensional reality (cast, props, lighting, camera movement, and backgrounds) would have to imagine how his images would look on a two-dimensional screen; now the ratio of the 3-D production environment and what audiences actually see on screen is more like 1:1.

Only twelve years separate the animation of the watery pseudopod in James Cameron's *The Abyss* (1989)—arguably the first computer-generated character of any real complexity to appear in a feature film—and the artificially intelligent (or stupid) Orcs and Gondorians fighting to the death *on their own* on the dark plain of Gogoroth in Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003). Using a desktop computer and commercial software, any one of us can now achieve in a relatively short amount of time what it took a team of ILM animators months to accomplish in 1989. Every generation thinks that it stands at the pinnacle of its civilization's technologies of representation, and no less do we.

Yet it would be wrong to see the evolution of CGI and digital cinema as simply a progression in the technology of special effects. It actually represents a shift in the direction of a new film aesthetic, in which postproduction acquires a status equal to production, and cinema is no longer exclusively the art of the moving photographic image. In a 1997 essay titled "What Is Digital Cinema?" Lev Manovich extrapolates from the field of computer-generated special effects five basic principles of this new aesthetic. First, the ability to generate photorealistic images directly in the computer displaces live-action photography as the *only* basic material from which film is constructed. Second, once live-action footage is digitized, it loses its privileged one-to-one relationship with reality, becoming just another set of pixels that the computer can sort and alter, as it does computer-generated pixels. Third, digitization enables film to achieve a degree of plasticity formerly possible only in painting or animation, so that it becomes not an end in itself, but raw material for further manipulation through compositing, morphing, cloning, and so on. Fourth, the computer collapses the distinction between



The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (Peter Jackson, 2003).



Pearl Harbor (Michael Bay, 2001).

editing and special effects, both practically and conceptually, because reordering a sequence of images in time (editing) and compositing them together in space (special effects) involve the same digital operation—the algorithmic manipulation of pixels, or, generically, "image processing." Fifth, working in the digital domain eliminates the distinction between creation and modification so endemic to film-based media (in photography, shooting versus lab work; in film, production versus postproduction). In this new aesthetic, in fact, cinema becomes, according to Manovich, "a particular case of animation which uses live action footage as one of its many elements. . . . In short, production becomes just the first stage of post-production."

If, in fact, the cinema can no longer be clearly distinguished from animation, then movies produced with new digital technologies and processes cannot be judged by the same standards as most of the narrative films described in this book that precede the advent of CGI. This isn't to suggest that CGI-intensive films should be exempt from the laws of coherent narrative, but rather that we also give them credit for being the truly brilliant works of animation that they sometimes are. *Pearl Harbor* (Michael Bay, 2001) may not be a very successful narrative, but its forty-five-minute attack sequence is surely one of the most astonishing works of three-dimensional computer animation ever rendered, and as a representation of epic modern battle action, it simply has no peer.

It is easy to imagine that Griffith and Eisenstein would have readily availed themselves of CGI to enhance the scale of their very different forms of spectacle. Similarly, one can only imagine what classical directors of twentieth-century cinema, such as Feuillade, Renoir, Welles, Ford, Rossellini, and Hitchcock, who strove to compose their images in depth before their time, could do with digital 3-D cinema. *Citizen Kane* (1941), for example, contains more optically composited shots than any film made before *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (Robert Zemeckis, 1988)—more than 50 percent, according to Robert Carringer in *The Making of "Citizen Kane"* (University of California Press, 1985)—and *The Birds*

(1963) is literally a tapestry of traveling matte shots, some containing as many as thirty separate elements. What digital film production promises is a new kind of cinema, defined by Lev Manovich as the creation of "something which is intended to look exactly as if it could have happened, although it really could not."

If the advent of digital filmmaking really did represent a new beginning for cinema, perhaps we should look at the films of its first decades in the same way that we look at those discussed in the first three chapters of this book, when narrative cinema was being shaped and codified. We do not valorize *Cabiria*, *The Birth of a Nation*, or *Intolerance* for their intellectual or conceptual content, much less *A Trip to the Moon*, *The Great Train Robbery*, or *The Lonely Villa*. We prize them, rather, for meeting difficult challenges of narrative expression and coherence at a time when the medium itself was new. Once these problems were solved and the solutions formalized, successive generations of filmmakers (aesthetic, rather than chronological)—for example, Murnau, Lang, Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Hitchcock, Renoir, and Welles—were free to infuse the medium with their unique visions and make the cinema the most important art form of the twentieth century.

In works such as *Moulin Rouge!* and The Lord of the Rings series, we can see intimations of the next generation of digital cinema and of CGI's potential to transform the narrative language of film into an even more powerful medium than it was during its first one hundred years.



Christian Bale in *The Dark Knight* (Christopher Nolan, 2008).



22

A Global Cinema?

During the 2010s, two trends became increasingly clear: the persistence of blockbuster megapictures (or "tent poles") and the renewed vitality of independent film, some of it art film. At the same time, the digitization of production, distribution, and exhibition in the West had its counterpart in the developing world, where digital video increasingly became the medium of choice.

Megapictures, or "Tent Poles"

Between 1990 and 1995, studio marketing costs rose by 92 percent, star salaries doubled, and production costs experienced double-digit growth, at the same time that box-office revenues increased by only 9 percent. Concurrently, the profit margin for features shrank to 14–15 percent. This dramatic inflation of costs threatened the industry in a major way, and so did an increase in the number of films released, from 167 to 212, as the flow of production financing and the ancillary market in home video paradoxically encouraged the majors to make ever more films. In 1995, an industry financial analyst could write that "[T]his is the worst time to be producing motion pictures in the history of the business." At that time, only 35 percent of industry earnings came from theatrical release (both domestic and foreign, the latter now exceeding the former); the remainder came from

ancillary markets, such as television, on-demand cable services, and DVD.

By the late 1990s, rising production costs made saturation booking, in which a movie opens everywhere on a single weekend (as opposed to platform booking, a slow release that starts in major cities and eventually moves out to the suburbs), the order of the day. More and more, pictures had to "open wide" merely to ensure that they returned their costs. And, in fact, during the 2000s, wide releases became a necessity: it was not uncommon for a major studio feature to open on 2,000 or even 3,000 screens. Such wide openings had the effect of putting heavy emphasis on the three-day grosses for a film's opening weekend, which were used to establish pricing for all of its subsequent windows—video, DVD, premium cable, streaming, and digital download. These other windows opened faster now than ever before, because of the practice of global wide release, which guaranteed that there would be no value in delaying a film's clearance to video and DVD, except for its theatrical run.

The American film industry in the early twenty-first century became a crucible for the creation of franchises and brands through the synergistic interaction of corporate parts. A franchise involves the creation of an infinitely exploitable entertainment product, such as the Star Wars (1977–2015), Alien (1979–2012; including *Prometheus*), Men in Black (1997–2012), Spider-Man (2002–2007), and The Amazing Spider-Man (2012–2014) series. An entertainment brand has been described by *The Economist* (1998:57) as "a lump of content [w]hich can be exploited through film, broadcast and cable television, publishing, theme parks, music, the Internet, and merchandising," similar to the spokes of a wheel radiating from the branded product, so that exploitation both produces an income stream and further strengthens the brand.

Examples of brands that spawned this kind of cross promotion include News Corp's *The X-Files* (1993–2008) or Time Warner's *Batman* (1989–1997) and its *Dark Knight* reboot (2005–2012). The effect was to repurpose material created initially for feature film production into other media or to re-purpose material created for other media into films. Often, the reproducibility of a film's brand was the key to obtaining production finance. According to film historian Michael Allen, synergy came to define the modern conglomerate-controlled film industry in the early twenty-first century: "It is the scale of supplementary product and the level of interaction that differentiate the modern period of American mainstream film-making from its predecessor."

In this new mode of cultural production, film subjects were now chosen and developed specifically for their possible connections with other media. For motion picture studios such as Disney, Paramount, and Warner, parts of diversified entertainment conglomerates owning broadcast and cable networks, there was an outlet for their media content, which diversified the opportunities into other markets demanding branded products.

Driven by necessity, exhibitors during the 1990s undertook a vast theater-building project to provide more screens to accommodate the higher volume of film releases. The new theaters featured multiple screens, state-of-the-art digital sound systems, and comfortable stadium seating, as well as menus of expanded concession items. However, the audience was not growing at the same rate as the theater chains. In 2000–2001, a number of major exhibitors filed for bankruptcy, and by the end of 2001, the U.S. market was reduced by nearly 10 percent. In the wake of the crisis, however, the exhibition market had stabilized by the close of the 2000s.

By the mid-2010s, the United States had the great advantage of sustaining the largest home market for motion pictures in the world: with more than 40,000 screens, an all-time high, American audiences accounted for 44 percent of the global box office in 2014. This domestic market, saturated as it was, provided studios with an opportunity to amortize a film's highest costs (those incurred in production) in the United States and then to derive pure profit from foreign and ancillary markets. In 2001, for instance, it was estimated that worldwide video/DVD revenue earned eight times the negative cost of a film. Global markets became increasingly important to the transnational entertainment conglomerates that dominated the U.S. film industry after the turn of the century.

International distribution grew during this period from a source of supplemental income to an economic imperative. Examples abound: *Troy* (Wolfgang Petersen, 2004), which Warner Bros. released in May 2004, made $133 million in the United States, but nearly three times that ($363 million) internationally; DreamWorks's *The Terminal* (Steven Spielberg, 2004) earned a disappointing $77.2 million domestically but another $96.3 million abroad; and Disney's *King Arthur* (Anthony Fuqua, 2004) earned only $51.8 million in the United States but $149.8 million abroad.

(right) Andrew Garfield in *The Amazing Spider-Man* (Marc Webb, 2012).





Emma Watson, Rupert Grint, and Daniel Radcliffe in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2* (David Yates, 2011).

Some American producers began to shape their films with foreign markets in mind: *Ocean's Eleven* (Steven Soderbergh, 2001) was deliberately set and filmed in Amsterdam, Paris, and Rome to enhance its international appeal, as were the Bourne films—*The Bourne Identity* (Doug Liman, 2002), *The Bourne Supremacy* (Paul Greenglass, 2004), *The Bourne Ultimatum* (Paul Greenglass, 2007), and *The Bourne Legacy* (Tony Gilroy, 2012). Risk reduction practiced on a global scale replaced the guaranteed success offered by the cartelized studio system, but concentration of market power by the American majors had never been stronger, or more disturbing in its totalizing nature, than it was by the mid-2010s.

During the 2000s, films from the seven major distributors, the constituent members of the MPAA—Warners, Universal, Paramount, Columbia, 20th Century–Fox, MGM/UA, and Disney (Buena Vista)—reached virtually every country on earth. Hollywood received about 40 percent of its film rentals from foreign sources. At the same time, it became clear that the domestic market was saturated and the industry's growth would have to come from overseas markets. In response, producers attempted to create global blockbusters—megapictures that would capture audiences worldwide.

As a result, Hollywood began to base its projects on the action-adventure genre, the comic book franchises such as Viacom-owned Iron Man (2008–2013) and Thor (2011–2013) series; Disney-owned Captain America (2011–2016) and The Avengers (2012–2015) series; Fox-owned X-Men (2006–2014) series; Warners-owned Watchmen (2009), Green Lantern (2011), Dark Knight (2005–2012), and Man of Steel (2013) series; and Sony-owned Spider-Man (2002–2007) and The Amazing Spider-Man (2012–2014) series; and then on internationally best-selling young adult (YA) books such as the Harry Potter, Twilight, and The Hunger Games series. As the *Wall Street Journal* remarked of *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* (2014), "The movie's curse is a head-banging gigantism that crushes any semblance of humanity [but] even bad movies can succeed in the international market, where audiences continue to consume action eagerly." (As if to prove the point, *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* earned $92 million domestically and $277 million overseas in its first weekend at 4,324 locations, nearly amortizing its $400 production and global marketing costs. The 2012 original, by contrast, ultimately took in $752.2 million worldwide.) The overseas audiences also reinforced the studios' reliance on stars. Thanks to the popularity of Tom Cruise, for example, *The Forty-Seven Loyal Ronin* (2014) made more money in Japan than it did in the United States, although it was based on a Japanese legend that had been filmed domestically many times over.

During the 2000s, studios sought an ever larger share of regional markets, and they set up production units or funded local-language projects in Mexico, Spain, France, Germany, Brazil, Russia, India, and China. In 2007, for example, Sony Pictures Entertainment CEO Michael Lynton contributed an op-ed piece to the *Wall Street Journal* titled "Globalization and Cultural Diversity," in which he argued that Hollywood's growing global operations "are not signs of Hollywood's homogenizing effect on the world [but] are signs of the world changing the way Hollywood works . . . to marry our production, marketing, and distribution experience with the growing global appetite for entertainment tailor-made by and for a variety of cultures."

According to film scholar Courtney Brannon Donoghue, Sony, Warner Bros., and 20th Century–Fox all structure their local-language production units around a "country-manager" system; that is, each company has a head of international production located in its Hollywood headquarters, but local managers run individual territories and operate as stand-alone, but not necessarily independent, producers. Universal and Disney also established local-language production units that relied more on alliances with local production companies than local managers. For instance, Universal

(right) Avatar universe in *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009).

struck a $100 million, five-picture deal with Cha, Cha, Cha Productions—a partnership of Guillermo del Toro, Alejandro González Iñárritu, and Alfonso Cuarón—in Mexico, as well as multipicture agreements with Fernando Meirelles's 02 Filmes in Brazil and Timur Bekmambetov's Bazelevs Productions in Russia.

In addition to alliances, Fox and Disney have developed a number of local-language productions by remaking successful English-language studio films for local audiences. Fox, for example, developed a Hindi version of *Bride Wars* (Gary Winick, 2009), while Disney recycled *High School Musical* (Kenny Ortega, 2006) for a number of territories, including Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and China. As financial analyst Frank Rose has said, "English is the language of the international blockbuster, but lower-budget pictures can be made in almost any language for the home market, and a few . . . will even become international hits. Hollywood, with its vast corporate resources, can call the shots in both tiers."

Hollywood's summer season, which runs from early May through Labor Day, typically accounts for 40 percent of annual box-office revenue. In 2013, receipts for the period totaled roughly $4.71 billion, a 19 percent increase over the summer of 2012. Ticket sales climbed primarily because the studios crammed an unusually large number of big-budget releases into theaters, but these megapictures also cannibalized one another, leading to a series of megaflops, most notably Disney's *The Lone Ranger* (Gore Verbinski, 2013). In 2014, the studios released ten films costing $100 million or more during the summer season, most of which were sequels and reboots, compared with seventeen such entries for 2013. They experienced a concomitant decline at the box office.

An index of studio corporate thinking is 20th Century–Fox's plan to release three successive Avatar sequels, written and directed by James Cameron, in three consecutive Decembers. (The original *Avatar* was released in 2009 to about $2.8 billion in worldwide sales.) Cameron and his partners spent years conceptualizing an entire Avatar universe that would be realized during two decades or more in various media, some of which have yet to be invented. The Avatar hiatus caused some shrinkage at Fox, which in 2013 fell to sixth among the majors in market share. In that year, Fox had about $1.1 billion in domestic ticket sales, compared with nearly $1.5 billion in 2010, when *Avatar* was poised to become the best-selling movie in history. Yet the new Avatar films were planned to have open-ended storytelling potential, and the long process of exploiting the films would only begin with their expected success in theaters.

As one of Cameron's closest associates put it, "This is not about any one medium." Cameron intended to shoot all three films simultaneously in New Zealand for just under $1 billion and pair them with an ongoing range of related enterprises, in which Fox would participate, to realize his vision—for example, at an



Avatar-themed area in Disney's Animal Kingdom in Orlando, Florida, Cameron helped design an attraction that would plant visitors on his mythical planet of Pandora, and, on a smaller scale, he joined with Cirque du Soleil to develop an Avatar-themed touring troupe. Furthermore, Fox reported that Cameron was closely examining virtual reality systems of the kind that Oculus VR, owned by Facebook, had been developing.

Hollywood Abroad

By the 2010s, the movie business had developed into two extremes in terms of commerce and culture: the Hollywood studios, largely dependent on their "tent-pole" blockbusters, and the independent auteurs working the festival circuit—the Mike Leighs, the David Cronenbergs, the Lars von Triers, and the Alejandro González Iñárritus. Hollywood was worried about the sharply increased defection of the young audience to handheld release formats such as cell phones, but was optimistic about the booming foreign box office. Festival filmmakers feared the incursion of the Hollywood blockbusters but were hopeful about the potential of digital and on-demand markets. At the same time, Hollywood marketers were trying to figure out why frequent filmgoers in the all-important eighteen-to-twenty-four age group bought 21 percent fewer tickets in 2013 than in 2012. The daunting reality in the domestic market was that the total number of tickets sold had fallen by nearly 11 percent between 2004 and 2013, a decline that had been masked by higher ticket prices. The average U.S. movie ticket price in 2013 increased to $8.13, up from $7.96 the year prior. And in some cities, a movie ticket was well over $10 in 2014, with 3-D and IMAX surcharges bringing them closer to $20 apiece. Meanwhile, the number of movies released by the seven major Hollywood studios dropped 11 percent in 2013 to 114. In 2006, by contrast, the majors released 204 films.

Clearly, the audience Hollywood most fervently chased lived abroad (and loved superheroes). The $35.9 billion global revenues for 2013 reflected an increase of 4 percent over 2012. In China alone, box office was up 27 percent (much of that admittedly from an increase in returns from local films). Region-wide, Asia Pacific exceeded Europe, the Middle East, and Africa in box office for the first time in 2013, with $11.1 billion, up from $10.9 billion, and Latin America grew at a 7 percent pace, but still lagged behind in total box office, with $3 billion.

Globalization's Effects on Local Cinemas

Recent books with titles such as *Global Bollywood* (NYU Press, 2008), *Global Nollywood* (Indiana University Press, 2013), *Japanese Cinema Goes Global* (Hong Kong University Press, 2012), and *World Cinema through Global Genres* (John Wiley & Sons, 2014) testify to the increasing globalization of cinema beyond Hollywood's force-feeding megapicture machine. This has been possible to a large extent because the technology of high-definition (HD) video has put the tools of classical Hollywood cinema into the hands of the world's have-nots and the disempowered, or at least those less powerful than America's international media conglomerates.

A case in point would be the Nigerian film industry ("Nollywood"), which produced a remarkable 9,000 full-length features on analog and digital video between 1992 and 2007. In 2006 alone, Nollywood completed nearly 1,600 films, at a combined cost of less than $60 million. Quickly shot on three- to ten-day schedules in English, Yoruba, or Hausu, these films are from seventy minutes to two hours long and depend on a genre-based star system. Nevertheless, they provide African directors with a mode of expression outside the bounds of traditional film production. Video is cheap to shoot and easily edited, with no processing involved; Nollywood features are often of low quality in artistic terms, but they offer both escapism and a forum for political and social expression to audiences all over Africa.

As Wheeler Winston Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster wrote in *21st-Century Hollywood* (Rutgers University Press, 2011), Nollywood has seized video to create a transnational cinema that allows Africans to see themselves on screen, rather than being colonized by Hollywood:

> Nollywood cinema is a people's cinema, unmediated by government agencies or corporate purse strings; no matter how stark and Spartan the production methods are, Nollywood's productions mirror the birth of cinema in any country in which the fever of self-representation first takes hold. [p. 92]

As such, Nollywood films are immensely popular with Nigerian audiences, as well as in neighboring African countries. Indeed, Kingsley Ogor's two-part Nollywood comedy *Osuofia in London* (2003–2004) took in more money on the first day of its release in Lagos than the simultaneous release of Peter Jackson's



Chiwetel Ejiofor and Thandie Newton in the Nollywood historical drama *Half of a Yellow Sun* (Biyi Bandele, 2013), which centers around two sisters during the Nigerian Civil War of the late 1960s.

The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003) in Nairobi. Furthermore, following the success of this screening, nearly 400,000 VHS and DVD transfers of the film went into circulation across the continent, meant for homes and video clubs, thus sustaining the new mode of distribution made possible by video. In the 2010s, a number of impressive films emerged from Nigeria, including Jeta Amata's *Black Gold* (2011), an action thriller focusing on corruption in the oil business in the Niger Delta; Charles Novia's *Majek* (2012), a biopic of Nigerian reggae star Majek Fashek; and Daniel Okoduwa's *Gossip Nation* (2012), a film noir set in metropolitan Lagos. Although digital formats have almost completely replaced analog, the output of Nollywood remains prodigious.

Yet digital video has transformed film industries other than those of the developing world in Africa, and it is not limited by any means to the arena of low-grade production. In Turkey, for example, it has helped foster a new art cinema movement in the work of the nation's leading director, Nuri Bilge Ceylan (b. 1959), who shoots his films on HD video and transfers them to 35mm stock for distribution. Ceylan has won multiple international awards—indeed, his sixth film, *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (*Bir zamanlar Anadolu'da*, 2011), premiered at Cannes, where it won the Grand Jury Prize; and his *Winter Sleep* (*Kis Uykusu*, 2014) won the Palme d'Or, making him only the second Turkish director to win that award (after Yilmaz Güney and Serif Gören won for *Yol* in 1982).

Ceylan spent his childhood in a small town in northwestern Turkey, and despite earning a university degree in engineering, he chose to pursue an artistic career, first as a photographer and then as a film director. Embracing a small-scale, artisanal mode of production, Ceylan prefers minimal crews and takes full control of all aspects of his films. In his debut feature, *The Small Town* (*Kasaba*, 1995), he worked with a crew of two (himself and a focus-puller); *Clouds of May* (*Mayis Sikintisi*, 1999) employed four people; and *Distant* (*Uzak*, 2002) used five, including himself. These first three features constitute a kind of trilogy, because they tell different chronological segments of the same story, focusing on the same characters, and they revolve around the same themes of journeys of homecoming and of leaving home.



(left) *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (*Bir zamanlar Anadolu'da*; Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2011).

Climates (*Iklimler*, 2006) was a more complicated affair, requiring a crew of fourteen, because Ceylan was using new HDCAM technology and worked as an actor in the film; it charts the declining relationship of a contemporary professional couple in Istanbul. *Three Monkeys* (*Üç maymun*, 2008) was more complex still—a crime drama, similar to his next film, shot in the digital cinemascope ratio of 2.35:1, which won Best Director at Cannes. Among his influences, Ceylan often mentions the Russian playwright Anton Chekov (to whom *Clouds of May*, in fact, is dedicated); as to filmmakers, he cites Bergman, Tarkovsky, Bresson, Ozu, and Kiarostami, although he may well be closer in form and theme to Michelangelo Antonioni. Like Antonioni, Ceylan deals with the alienation of the individual from society and the monotony of everyday life, often in the form of nominal genre films.

Once Upon a Time in Anatolia, for example, is part police procedural and part existential meditation on the nature of truth; it revolves around the search for a murdered man whose body, at first, cannot be found, and it demonstrates the truism that the more we know, the less we understand. Similarly, in *Winter Sleep*, a former actor runs a small hotel with his young wife and his recently divorced sister in central Anatolia; when winter comes, the hotel becomes both a refuge and an inescapable trap for all three. With the exception of *Climates*, Ceylan has produced all of his films himself on relatively small budgets but has always earned enough money from awards and television rights to fund his next project.

Another internationally distinguished film artist who shoots primarily on video is Thai New Wave director Apichatpong Weerasethakul (b. 1970), whose work provides a shining example of how the democratization of digital technologies can allow small, regional filmmaking to flourish and sometimes to reach larger audiences. In fact, Weerasethakul's feature *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* won the 2010 Palme d'Or at Cannes and became the first Thai film to do so. Uncharacteristically shot on film, *Uncle Boonmee* represents the final installment in a multiplatform project called "Primitive," which deals with the Isan region in northeastern Thailand, where Weerasethakul came of age.

Earlier installments include a seven-part video installation (2009) and two 2008 shorts, *A Letter to Uncle Boonmee* and *Phantoms of Nabua*; together, they constitute an extended rumination on the themes of memory, transformation, extinction, and reincarnation. According to the director (who also produces and writes his own work), the *Uncle Boonmee* feature is about "objects and people that transform or hybridize," and a



Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives (Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 2010).

crucial theme is the transformation and extinction of the cinema itself. The film comprises six reels, each shot in a different style, which include, in the words of Weerasethakul, "old cinema with stiff acting and classical staging," "documentary style," "costume style," and "my kind of film when you see long takes of animals and people driving."

As he explained in an interview, "When you make a film about recollection and death, you realize that cinema is also facing death. *Uncle Boonmee* is one of the last pictures shot on film—now everybody shoots digital. It's my own little lamentation."

Weerasethakul earned a bachelor's degree in architecture from Khon Kaen University in Thailand in 1994 and an MFA in filmmaking from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1997. His feature debut was a poetic, experimental documentary titled *Mysterious Object at Noon* (2000), which was followed by the independent narrative feature *Blissfully Yours* (2002), a romance film that won the Un Certain Regard prize at Cannes. Weerasethakul's third feature was *Tropical Malady*, another romantic melodrama, which took the Jury Prize at Cannes in 2004. *Syndromes and a Century* (2006) was a tribute to the director's parents, who worked as doctors in hospitals in rural Thailand and Bangkok; it ran into problems when he refused to cut four scenes at the demand of the Thai Board of Censors. The film was withdrawn from circulation but has since been shown with the cut scenes replaced by black screens to protest its censorship.

No such difficulties attended *Uncle Boonmee*, which was released domestically just after winning the Palme d'Or, one theater at a time, playing once each day. After three months of screenings all over the country, it had earned nearly $500,000—a significant sum for a Thai independent feature and one that opened the door to a friendlier approach to other experimental work in Thailand. Now, instead of garnering recognition abroad and then securing a domestic release, Thai New Wave cinema is given early release at home, thanks to the proliferation of HD video.

Digital Distribution

By the mid-2010s, about 87 percent of the 5,762 movie theaters in the United States had switched to digital projectors, including most major chains and half of the country's 600 drive-in theaters. The majors shifted from distributing movies on reels to digital distribution via hard drives or satellite, which was cheaper for the studios (the estimated cost of film per print is $2,000; a digital print costs about $120 to copy and ship) but required significant investment by theaters in new equipment. Major U.S. cinema chains have converted essentially all of their screens to digital distribution, many using Wall Street–financed programs that allowed studios to shoulder some of the expense, in anticipation of the switch.

Yet those programs favored theaters with reliable credit and required up-front expenses for theater owners, such as projection-booth renovations costs, that many small theaters, however important to their communities, couldn't afford. Some companies leased digital projectors to small theaters that couldn't make a lump-sum payment. In October 2013, Warner Bros. produced only 200 film prints for its release *Gravity*, which opened in more than 3,000 locations. That proportion has trended downward with each wide release since then. In January 2014, Paramount became the first major studio to stop releasing movies on film in the United States.

Meanwhile, the big theater chains desperately searched for new ways to grow revenue in the United States and Canada, where attendance had been softening for a decade. Large-format screens, plush seating, in-theater dining, and other premium features were a central strategy for achieving the growth they desired. For example, Cinemark Holdings and the country's two biggest theater chains, Regal Entertainment and AMC Entertainment, together operated hundreds of IMAX auditoriums, which use proprietary technology to project movies in extra-high resolution on floor-to-ceiling screens. Ticket buyers would pay an extra $3 to $5 to watch movies in them, with IMAX collecting fees from its chain partners totaling about 20 percent of ticket sales.

In 2009, the chains—led by Cinemark—started using off-the-shelf digital technology to build their own large-format theaters, which operate under a grab bag of brands, including BigD, EXT, Prime, RPX, UltraAVX, and XD. Just as with IMAX, moviegoers pay a premium to watch movies in these auditoriums. Unlike IMAX, however, the chains did not have to share revenue with another exhibitor. In late 2014, there were 365 non-museum IMAX venues in North America, and the chains were operating 325 of their own large-format screens. Though Cinemark and the other chains focused on growing their own brands, IMAX clearly had the edge, enjoying a strong relationship with marquee directors such as Michael Bay, Brad Bird, and Christopher Nolan, who came to insist that their films be released in the format.

"Independent" Film

While the blockbuster syndrome was reconfiguring Hollywood around the megapicture, the 1990s also witnessed the rise of independent films, both through the film festival circuit and at the box office, while established actors such as Bruce Willis, John Travolta, and Tim Robbins scored hits in "indies" and in studio films alike. Indie festivals such as South by Southwest (SXSW) (founded in 1987), Sundance (founded in 1991), Raindance (founded in 1992), and Slamdance (founded in 1995) showcased independent features in increasingly large numbers. In 1990, New Line Cinema's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, based on a videogame, grossed more than $100 million domestic, making it the most successful independent film in box-office history.

Simultaneously, Miramax experienced a string of hits—including *Cinema Paradiso* (1988); *sex, lies, and videotape* (1989); *My Left Foot* (1989); and *Clerks* (1994)—which put it, New Line, and a number of other profitable indie companies in the sights of the major entertainment conglomerates. In 1993, Disney acquired Miramax and released the game-changing *Pulp Fiction* (1994) the following year. Between 1993 and 1994, Turner Broadcasting bought New Line Cinema, Fine Line Features, and Castle Rock Entertainment for the collective sum of $1 billion, releasing *The Mask* (New Line), *Dumb and Dumber* (New Line), and *The Shawshank Redemption* (Castle Rock) to great popular success in 1994.

These acquisitions were part of a larger plan by the Hollywood studios to gobble up the independent film industry and simultaneously start "independent" studios of their own—Sony Pictures Classics was inaugurated in 1992, Fox Searchlight Pictures in 1995, Paramount Vantage Pictures in 1998, Focus Features (a joint venture of NBC/Universal) in 2002, and Warner Independent Pictures in 2003. Although



Toni Collette, Abigail Breslin, Alan Arkin, Paul Dano, Steve Carell, and Greg Kinnear in *Little Miss Sunshine* (Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, 2006).

indie blockbusters were the exception (e.g., *The Blair Witch Project* [1999], which was shot on a digital camcorder for $35,000 and sold to mini-distributor Artisan for $1 million, was marketed heavily on the Internet, and earned more than $241 million worldwide), by acquiring indie companies and setting up their own specialty divisions—a process frequently referred to as the "indiewoodization" of American independent cinema—the majors could recruit new talent and diversify their product with prestige pictures and other "quirky" projects.

By the early 2000s, Hollywood was distributing three different categories of films: studio-produced mega-budget blockbusters with negative costs far exceeding $100 million, niche-market specialty films from the conglomerate-owned indies with average negative costs of $40 million and marketing budgets in the range of $15 million, and genre and art films coming from true indie producers. This third category comprised more than half of the features released domestically during the 2000s and usually cost between $5 and $10 million to produce. By 2005, about 15 percent of the U.S. domestic box office derived from such independent films.

The advent of low-cost, high-end digital film equipment at the consumer level meant that indie producers were no longer dependent on the technical resources of the majors. By the 2010s, thousands of small companies could produce films for a fraction of the cost of Hollywood product. Postproduction was also rendered inexpensive by nonlinear editing software, available for home computers. For example, Greg Harrison's complex, multileveled thriller *November* (2004) was shot on mini-DV in fifteen days and spent forty-five days in postproduction with Avid Media Composer software. The increasing feasibility of low-budget films after 2000 caused a vast increase in the number of aspiring filmmakers, people hoping to turn existing scripts into profitable indie hits, such as *Little Miss Sunshine* (Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, 2006) or *Juno* (Jason Reitman, 2007).

Independent filmmaking also resulted in a proliferation of short films and documentaries, as well as festivals organized around both. Feature-length theatrical films are frequently showcased at festivals such as Sundance, South by Southwest, and Cannes, where award-winners are often picked up for distribution by the Hollywood majors (the so-called negative pickup). These tend to be less commercial, character-driven films that appealed to the "art house" market, as did those from the most prolific of the modern independent studios, which produced and released indie films and foreign-language films in the United States—Film 4 Productions, Lion's Gate Films, IFC Films, Samuel Goldwyn Films, The Weinstein Company/Dimension Films, and Magnolia Pictures, among others.

Beyond these prominent independents, there were thousands of smaller companies by the mid-2010s that produced authentic indie films every year, looking to release them regionally or to secure additional financing to distribute, market, and exhibit their projects on a national scale. As feature filmmaking went digital and distribution followed, the distinction between theatrical "film," direct-to-video, and feature films whose main distribution network is electronic continued to blur.

A Glut of Indie Films?

The independent sector became an important part of the American film landscape during the period of its growth and institutionalization, from the latter part of the 1980s and into the 1990s and the early 2000s. The success of a number of individual indie films provoked interest from Hollywood and the creation of a range of studio "specialty" divisions, the operations of which contributed to a blurring of some distinctions between indie and the mainstream. Exactly what *indie* denotes in this context is the subject of much debate. The term is used not simply as a diminutive of "independent" but to signify a particular region of the film landscape that has much in common with other aspects of "indie" culture in fields such as music and publishing.

If a more literal use of "independent" is taken to mean the whole range of film production, distribution, and exhibition beyond the realms of the main operations of the Hollywood studios, "indie" has more specific connotations, suggesting a particular kind of cinema in a particular context. In this usage, indie embraces films ranging from very-low or almost no-budget narrative feature production to documentaries handled by the studio specialty divisions. It also ranges from the grainy 16mm film of some productions in the 1980s and the early 1990s to the contemporary use of digital video, and from the realm of more traditional theatrical exhibition to attempts to harness the Internet as a realm of circulation and consumption.

The development of the independent film sector in the 1990s and the 2000s was spurred by a number of factors, but the most important was the advent of affordable digital cinema cameras that could

challenge 35mm in resolution and the arrival of easy-to-use editing software that lowered the technology barrier to production and postproduction. In the same way, digital technologies (such as DVD/Blu-ray discs) and online video streaming via services (such as Netflix) have greatly reduced the cost of distribution, so that the cost of professional film equipment and stock—which continues to inflate, even as digital spreads to the studios—was no longer a major obstacle to independent directors and their crews. (Even 3-D technology is available to low-budget filmmakers today.)

In 2008, Canon introduced the first digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera that could shoot full HD (1080p) video at 24 fps, which is considered the standard resolution for "film," and achieved the look of 35mm without the same high cost. Subsequent DSLRs allowed for greater control over depth of field, low lighting capabilities, and a wide variety of exchangeable lenses, including those from older 35mm film cameras. Instead of needing a professional postproduction house to do their editing, independent filmmakers were able to use personal computers and inexpensive editing and color-grading software to do the task. All of these new technologies allowed independent filmmakers to create work that had the look of 35mm film, without its high cost and inflexibility.

Slow Cinema, Long Films

One phenomenon that has emerged from the newly energized indie wave is "slow cinema," a category of art film that emphasizes long takes, minimalism, observation, and nonnarrative strategies of storytelling. It has been described as an "act of organized resistance" to corporate Hollywood megabudget action films; it has also been called "contemplative cinema" and "transcendental cinema." Early practitioners include Yasujiro Ozu, Robert Bresson, Michelangelo Antonioni, and later, Andrei Tarkovsky, Aleksandr Sokurov, and Béla Tarr. In a feature article about the Slow Cinema



Julieta Zylberberg and Maria Alche in *The Holy Girl* (Lucrecia Martel, 2004).

movement, the British news outlet *The Guardian* contrasted the long takes of the style with the two-second average shot length (ASL) of Hollywood action films and noted that slow cinema opts for "ambient noises or field recordings rather than bombastic sound designs" and embraces "subdued visual schemes that require the viewer's eye to do more work, and evoke a sense of mystery that springs from the landscapes and local customs they depict more than it does from generic convention."

Slow cinema isn't a new phenomenon per se: it is international and encompasses everything from the work of Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami (*Close-Up* [1990], *A Taste of Cherry* [1997], and *Certified Copy* [2010]) to that of Argentine filmmaker Lucrecia Martel (*La Ciénaga* [2001], *The Holy Girl* [2004], and *The Headless Woman* [2008]), the Turkish director Nuri Bilge Ceylan (*Climates* [2006], *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* [2011], and *Winter Sleep* [2014]), and the work of several directors of the Romanian "New Wave"—for example, Cristi Puiu's *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* (2005) and *Aurora* (2010); and Cristian Mungiu's *4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days* (2007).

Slow cinema has been criticized as being indifferent, even hostile, to its audience—of being precious, pretentious, and deliberately impenetrable. Yet as film scholar Eric Patrick has written, out beyond the "cacophony of summer blockbusters, rebooted [franchises], and the whirl of smartphone users, there is a collection of filmmakers quietly observing contemporary life through a sparse and economical cinema. . . . The result is an alternative to cinema's dominant visual syntax, and how it speaks to the human condition."

Or, as Wheeler Winston Dixon points out, "Given the often mindless films that rule the multiplex, where everything is constant action, motion, and violence in a constant barrage of computer-generated frenzy, [these] more contemplative, insightful films offer a useful antidote to the nonstop kineticism of mainstream modern cinema."

A 2014 *New York Times* review of Philippine director Lav Diaz's *Norte, the End of History* opened this way:

> More than four hours long, filmed in expansive takes with almost no close-ups and very few camera movements, [the film] is a tour de force of slow cinema. The movie . . . is not difficult or obscure . . . but it does require an adjustment of the usual viewing metabolism. You can spend a lot more time binge-watching a television series, but that would mean cruising through scenes of snappy editing, on-the-nose dialogue and ready-made emotional payoffs, but Mr. Diaz . . . is interested in a different kind of immersion.

Long Movies on Television

By the mid-2010s, conventional wisdom held that television had entered a Golden Age and movies were in a period of decline—a dubious claim, because much television of the period was still bad, and a lot of movies were really very good. Yet there is no doubt that the small screen snatched some of the cultural prestige that cinema long regarded as its birthright. Accounts of this rivalry tended to understate the degree of creative overlap and corporate codependency of the two media. Movies and television series are produced in the same facilities by the same people, after all. Actors, writers, and filmmakers migrate from one form to the other so often that rather than ask which is better, we might rather ask which is which. Each might have something to learn from the other. Television needs more visual inventiveness and personal vision, while movies could use some of the darkness that pervades the best TV dramas and the anarchy that animates its most daring comedies.

Nevertheless, long-form television does enable the articulation of detail necessary to provide the foundation for a believable narrative, while feature films do not often have that luxury. *Game of Thrones* provides an example of why television is sometimes so much better than movies. The special effects in that series are almost as good as they are in feature films. The sex is often more graphic than in feature films. And the stories are not compromised by running time. Characters can be developed, they can be discarded, and they can follow a complete arc of birth, life, and death.

For example, there were at least a dozen separate story lines going on in the third season, some intersecting, and some that will clearly intersect in the future. Those who try to watch the show as it is broadcast on HBO may get to see what happens before binge viewers, but they don't get to savor it, because it is hard enough keeping everything straight when you watch the episodes together. Wait a week between each episode, and you forget much of who or what or where—and less seems to happen. A whole season runs a total of five-hundred-and-sixty-one minutes, so it is not much of a challenge to watch in a day, and in fact, it can be an enormous pleasure.

(right) Katie Dickie and Sophie Turner in *Game of Thrones*, Season 4, "Mockingbird" (Alik Sakharov, 2014).



The dream of long-form cinema is an old one and can be traced back to European/Continental pioneers of the multi-episode serial, such as Louis Feuillade (*Fantomas* [1913–1914], *Les vampires* [1915–1916], and *Judex* [1916]), and visionary directors such as Erich von Stroheim, who attempted in 1924 with *Greed* to release a nine-hour version of Frank Norris's naturalistic novel *McTeague* (1899), or Abel Gance, whose Oedipal epic *La roue* (1922–1923) was also intended for release in a nine-hour version. (Moreover, Gance's *Napoléon vu par Abel Gance* [1927] originally ran twenty-eight reels but was reduced by subsequent distributors to eight.)

More recently, Rainer Werner Fassbinder adapted Alfred Döblin's classic novel of working-class life, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929), as a fourteen-part series for West German television (1980), and Edgar Reitz produced the sixteen-hour original TV miniseries *Heimat* (*Homeland*, 1984; also released theatrically), which recounts the history of twentieth-century Germany as reflected in the lives of three families in a Rhineland village. In the 2010s, as A-list filmmakers such as Jane Campion, David Fincher, and Steven Soderbergh found it increasingly difficult to get serious projects green-lighted, they turned to long-form television, where they could also function as their own producers—for Campion, *Top of the Lake* (2013); for Fincher, *House of Cards* (2013); and for Soderbergh, *The Knick* (2014).

DVD

By the beginning of 2014, the number of new DVD and Blu-ray releases and, perhaps most significant, the number of new announcements for DVD releases dropped precipitously. While the number of new Blu-ray releases remained a bit more stable, it by no means grew to meet the gap. Although DVDs in the mid-2010s were still hanging on, the overall market shifted slowly toward collectors and *cinéphiles*, whose interest in source materials, extras, and the best image quality trumped the advantages of convenience and immediacy that streaming, on-demand, and mobile viewing provided. General consumers, who never really wanted to collect movies anyway and who have always been willing to sacrifice image quality as long as they enjoy the story, were increasingly accessing motion pictures from the Internet straight to their TVs, computers, and mobile devices during this period.

"Binge-Watching"

The term "binge-watching" goes back to the introduction of DVDs in the 1990s, when fans were able to watch several episodes of a particular show or series via DVD sets. Its usage was popularized with the arrival of on-demand viewing and online streaming. In 2013, the word went viral when Netflix started releasing episodes of its own serial programming simultaneously. Netflix's own survey in late 2013 determined that a majority of U.S. households regularly watched two to three episodes of a series in a single sitting, that they preferred this method of consuming serial content, and that they believed there was simply too much quality TV to watch episodically—quite a turnabout from the 1960s, when then FCC chairman Newton Minow called TV "a vast wasteland." It was immediately clear that in a highly fragmented 140-character, 24/7 world, viewers were seeking out longer-form, more complex storytelling, and they preferred to have the option of viewing entire seasons of multi-episodic content all at once.

What was (and is) the appeal of binge-watching? Brain chemistry plays a role. "We get into something akin to a trance with great storytelling," says psychiatrist Norman Doige. The urge to sustain the inner experience leads you to press "play" on the next episode and the one after that—the equivalent of a book you can't put down. Longer, uninterrupted viewing sessions can lead to "a deeper virtual-reality experience of the narrative. It can seem more real, from a neurological point of view." Was binge-watching a fad? In the mid-2010s, there was evidence of an emergent backlash against the practice. In 2013, *Slate* warned viewers to hit the brakes, going so far as to suggest guidelines for catch-up viewing, including a minimum twenty-four-hour waiting period between episodes to let them sink in and avoid the risk of "binger's remorse."

It's also understandable that networks and streaming services saw drawbacks to such an approach, including the difficulty in promoting their series and in generating buzz about them. Amazon Studios—the film production unit within Amazon—refused to release its original content all at once, because it wanted people to be able to talk openly about the individual shows without fear of spoiling things for people who weren't caught up. Amazon believed that social media buzz, an increasingly important component of film and television marketing during the mid-2010s, faded more quickly for binge-watched shows than for shows

that air week to week. By refusing to post an entire season, as Netflix had done with *House of Cards*, Amazon hoped to maintain some control over the conversation about their productions on social media. (This can be seen as a latter-day version of the ceding of program content control to projectionists from producers in the early novelty period of motion pictures.)

Control is crucial, but so is quality. People will tune in at a specific time, on a specific night each week, for one episode of a show and will even wait weeks or months for more episodes, but interest and dedication rely heavily on how good the series is. With that in mind, it could be argued that Netflix's approach was an effort to compensate for sub-par programming. Yet its initial run of original shows, for example, *Orange Is the New Black* and *House of Cards*, were on par with series featured on premium cable channels and released serially.

The ramifications of binge-viewing were bigger than the occasional lost weekend, because binging broke habits that had long supported the TV business, built as it was on advertising and syndicated reruns. TV executives were torn by the development—gratified that viewers were gorging on their product but frustrated that advertisers weren't part of the equation. Furthermore, in the mid-2010s, online video outlets started to chip away at television's hold on advertisers. In 2014, for example, several major advertisers, including MasterCard and Verizon Wireless, moved a portion of the money they previously spent on television to online outlets, conscious that viewers were more frequently watching video online. While companies had been putting money into online video ads for years, few talked about moving TV ad dollars there. Rather, it usually came from their print and display budgets. Yet as video content kept improving and audience measurement became increasingly refined, marketers became more comfortable moving TV dollars to the online environment.

Nearly 88 million people watched online video on a daily basis in March 2014, up 14 percent from a year earlier. Major cable and broadcast networks, meanwhile, saw their ratings post steep declines in the preceding years. The effect on the flow of advertising dollars was extreme. While TV pulled in $66.35 billion in 2013, accounting for 38.8 percent of total U.S.



Taylor Schilling and Vicky Jeudy in *Orange Is the New Black*, Season 1, "Imaginary Enemies" (Michael Trim, 2013).

ad spending, and digital media drew about 25 percent that same year, industry insiders were predicting that by 2018, TV and digital media advertising would represent nearly equal percentages of all ad dollars—close to 35 percent each.

Giants in the Earth

After decades of pursuing a cautious strategy that emphasized returning capital to shareholders over making notable acquisitions, American media companies were poised in the mid-2010s for a major round of consolidation. A clear trigger was that their biggest customers, the cable and satellite-TV providers that pay to license their TV channels, were gaining scale through their own mergers. Cable giant Comcast Corp., already merged with Vivendi S.A.'s NBC Universal, sought government approval in 2014 to buy Time Warner Cable Inc. (later deciding against the acquisition), while DirectTV merged with AT&T Inc. that same year. The gigantic entertainment conglomerates that resulted from those two deals, which, combined, encompassed more than half of all pay-TV subscribers, increased their leverage when negotiating for programming, and threatened the subscription revenue that U.S. media companies depend on.

At the time of the writing of this book (mid-2015), the most likely acquirers include big media cartels such as 21st Century–Fox Inc. and Walt Disney Co., whose size and control of popular sports, news, and broadcast programming give them extra leverage over pay-TV providers. Midsize companies, such as Viacom Inc. and Discovery Communications Inc., could be buyers of companies such as Scripps or AMC, or sellers to bigger companies, depending on the scenario. Despite its size, Time Warner, a media giant with a $60 billion market capitalization, is viewed as a possible target, having spun off or sold a series of businesses during the last decade: its music division, AOL, cable distribution, and most recently, the Time Inc. publishing division. A wild card is whether streaming giant Netflix Inc. could jump into any bidding, seeking to boost its production capacity.

Running cable channels was still a lucrative business in the mid-2010s, but pay-TV subscriptions plateaued at roughly 100 million households. The market had already shrunk in several quarters in the previous years, and by late 2014, there were fears in the industry that more consumers would "cut the cord" in favor of online streaming services or never sign up in the first place, forcing media companies to rely more on raising the per-subscriber prices they charge for TV-channel carriage to stimulate growth. At the same time, growth in TV advertising slowed, and overall spending on TV shrank by 0.1 percent from 2013 to 2014. As TV is increasingly distributed on demand and through apps, some content and channels will prove more valuable than others. Netflix and Amazon have shown themselves less willing to pay as much for unscripted nonfiction as for other types of programming, such as scripted and serialized dramas.

Some Contemporary Trends

The Rise and Fall of "Torture Porn"

Between the years 2004 and 2010, a disturbing subgenre of horror films appeared that combined elements of the "splatter" with the slasher film and was dubbed "torture porn," emphasizing violence, nudity, torture, mutilation, and sadism. Eli Roth's *Hostel* (2005), Greg McLean's *Wolf Creek* (2005), and Rob Zombie's *The Devil's Rejects* (2005) were the first films to attract the title, but the phenomenon arguably began with James Wan's *Saw* (2004) and the six-film franchise it spawned through 2012.

"Torture porn" was fantastically lucrative: *Saw*, produced for $1.2 million, grossed more than $100 million worldwide; and *Hostel*, with a negative cost of $5 million, grossed more than $80 million. (The Saw franchise, in fact, became the most profitable horror film series of all time.) Lion's Gate, the studio that



Saw 3D: The Final Chapter (Kevin Greutert, 2010).

sponsored the films, saw its stock prices increase as a result of their box-office success, and other producers rushed to imitate them with titles such as *Turistas* (John Stockwell, 2006), *Hostel: Part II* (Eli Roth, 2007), *Borderland* (Zev Berman, 2007), and *Captivity* (Roland Joffe, 2007).

Although many critics found torture porn to be morally repugnant, it was given a major aesthetic boost within the industry by the appearance of a new wave of French films—collectively referred to as "the New French Extremity" for their extreme brutality. *Artforum* critic James Quandt, who had coined the term, described a group of twenty-first-century directors who "break every taboo, to wade in rivers of viscera and spumes of sperm, to fill each frame with flesh, nubile or gnarled, and subject it to all manner of penetration, mutilation, and defilement."

Quandt associates the work of Gaspar Noé, François Ozon, Catherine Breillat, and Bruno Dumont, as well as Clair Denis's *Trouble Every Day*, Patrice Chéreau's *Intimacy*, Bertrand Bonello's *The Pornographer*, Marina de Van's *In My Skin*, Leos Carax's *Pola X*, Philippe Grandrieux's *La vie nouvelle* and *Sombre*, Jean-Claude Brisseau's *Secret Things*, Jacques Nolot's *La chatte à deux têtes*, Virginie Despentes and Coralie Trinh Thi's *Baise-moi*, and Alexandre Aja's *High Tension* with this movement, also known as *cinéma du corps*. Even more extreme are films such as *Frontier(s)* (Xavier Gens, 2007), *Inside* (Alexandre Bustillo and Julien Maury, 2007), and *Martyrs* (Pascal Laugier, 2008), which had respectable budgets and intelligent scripts but were viscerally brutal to the point of unwatchability.

By the end of the 2000s in the United States, torture porn had largely been replaced by remakes and reboots of horror films from earlier decades, modernized for the new century. Significant titles here were *Dawn of the Dead* (Zack Snyder, 2004), *The Amityville Horror* (Andrew Douglas, 2005), *House of Wax* (Jaume Collet-Serra, 2005), *Black Christmas* (Glen Morgan, 2006), *Halloween* (Rob Zombie, 2007), *My Bloody Valentine 3D* (Patrick Lussier, 2009), *Friday the 13th* (Marcus Nispel, 2009), *The Wolfman* (Joe Johnston, 2010), *The Crazies* (Breck Eisner, 2007), *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Samuel Bayer, 2010), and *Carrie* (Kimberly Pierce, 2013). Some of these remakes were labeled "torture porn" by the press—for example, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Marcus Nispel, 2003), *Funny Games* (Michael Haneke, 2008), *The Hills Have Eyes* (Alexandre Aja, 2006), *The Last House on the Left* (Dennis Iliadis, 2009), and *I Spit on Your Grave* (Steven R. Monroe, 2010)—but they lacked the sadistic visceral intensity of *Saw* and *Hostel*; not so for *The Human Centipede* (Tom Six, 2010), *A Serbian Film* (Srđan Spasojević, 2010), and *The Human Centipede II* (*Full Sequence*) (Tom Six, 2012), which prominently featured coprophilia, pedophilia, and necrophilia, signaling that torture porn had reached the point of diminishing returns that produces less revulsion than self-parody.

A recent trend in American horror has been semi-documentary "recovered/found footage" work such as the Paranormal Activity franchise (Oren Peli, et al., 2007–2014), in which the actors are given outlines of the stories and situations to improvise in the manner of *The Blair Witch Project* (Eduardo Sánchez and Daniel Myrick, 1999)—itself influenced by the explicit Italian "found footage" mockumentary *Cannibal Holocaust* (Ruggero Deodato, 1980)—a technique known as "retroscripting." Perhaps the most influential "found footage" film of recent years was producer J. J. Abrams's *Cloverfield* (Matt Reeves, 2008), in which a Godzilla-like monster attacks New York City; shot in *cinéma vérité* fashion with a Sony CineAlta HD video camera, its shaky handheld style caused some viewers to experience motion sickness in the theaters, prompting a number of exhibitors to post disclaimers in their lobbies.

Horror has been one of the most commercially successful genres of the second decade of the twenty-first century, taking in nearly $600 million at the box office in 2013, or 53 percent more than in 2012, which scored itself more than 21 percent higher than 2011. Some critics have attributed its popularity to the widespread cultural malaise produced by the 9/11 terror attacks.

The Hybridization of Comedy and Drama

Sparked by the success of *When Harry Met Sally . . .* (1989), the 1990s witnessed the reappearance of the romantic comedy, or **"rom com"** in industry-speak, in such popular films as *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993), *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994), *Clueless* (1995), *You've Got Mail* (1998), *Sliding Doors* (1998), and *Notting Hill* (1999).

At the lower end of the scale were so-called gross-out comedies targeted at a younger demographic, represented by films such as the Farrelly brothers' *Dumb and Dumber* (1994), *There's Something about Mary* (1998), and *Me, Myself, and Irene* (2000); Tom Green's *Freddy Got Fingered* (2001); and the American Pie franchise (1999–present), written and conceived by Adam Herz. Serious adult comedies of a



Scarlett Johansson and Bill Murray in *Lost in Translation* (Sofia Coppola, 2003).

darker hue began to appear in 2000s, in the form of films such as *Secretary* (Steven Shainberg, 2002), *Lost in Translation* (Sofia Coppola, 2003), *Shopgirl* (Anand Tucker, 2005), *The Weatherman* (Gore Verbinski, 2005), and *Broken Flowers* (Jim Jarmusch, 2005), demonstrating that serious auteurs were pursuing a form of dramatic comedy dubbed **"dramedies"** in the trade press.

Four Comic Talents

Four other prominent American comic writer-directors are David O. Russell (b. 1958), Spike Jonze (b. Adam Spiegel, 1969), Alexander Payne (b. 1961), and Wes Anderson (b. 1969). Russell began his career with the dark comedy about teenage alienation *Spanking the Monkey* (1994) and the classical screwball comedy *Flirting with Disaster* (1996), about an adoptive son's quest for his biological parents. *Three Kings* (1999) is a comedy/adventure thriller set in the last days of the Gulf War in 1991, involving the theft by three American GIs of Saddam Hussein's stash of Kuwaiti gold, while *I Heart Huckabees* (2004) is a philosophically inflected comedy about an environmental group's attempts to thwart the construction of a "big-box" chain store in their community. Although *The Fighter* was an award-winning biographical sports drama, Russell returned to screwball comedy with *Silver Linings Playbook* (2012), a gigantic critical and commercial success, turning on a romantic relationship between two bipolar characters. *American Hustle* is a fictionalized account of the FBI Abscam sting operation of the late 1970s and early 1980s, which takes the form of a comedic crime drama.

The work of Spike Jonze is considerably more idiosyncratic. He began his career as a director of TV commercials and music videos and was co-creator of the MTV series *Jackass*, as well as *Jackass: The Movie* (Jeff Tremaine, 2002). His first feature film as a director was *Being John Malkovich* (1999), an Expressionistic comedy about a failed puppeteer who enters the mind of the actor John Malkovich through a secret portal in an office that employs him as a file clerk. In *Adaptation* (2002), a screenwriter struggles with writer's block, while trying to create a faithful version of another writer's autobiography. Following this well-received piece of comic metacinema, Jonze produced a dark version of Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) that combined live action with animatronics and CGI,



John Cusack in *Being John Malkovich* (Spike Jonze, 1999).

and in 2013, he wrote and directed *Her*, a bizarre romantic comedy about an isolated young man who falls genuinely in love with the female voice of his computer's operating system.

Similar to the work of Russell and Jonze, that of Alexander Payne is noted for its dark humor and satirical depictions of contemporary American life. His major films are *Election* (1999), which mirrors the ruthless absurdity of national politics in the context of a suburban high-school election; *About Schmidt* (2002), a comedy-drama that follows an emotionally alienated retiree/widower on a road trip to his daughter's wedding; *Sideways* (2004), a seriocomic send-up of California wine culture snobbery; *The Descendants* (2010), in which a Honolulu-based attorney must raise two teenaged daughters while his wife lies in a coma and simultaneously decide on the disposition of a 25,000-acre family trust on the historic island of Kauai; and *Nebraska* (2013), about a hard-drinking old codger who travels from Billings, Montana, to Lincoln, Nebraska, to retrieve a $1 million prize he mistakenly believes he has won in a sweepstake.

Wes Anderson's first critical success was the quirky comedy *Rushmore* (1998), which concerned a high school student's crush on a teacher and starred Bill Murray, who has since appeared in all of Anderson's films to date. *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001), about a dysfunctional artistic family in New York City, and *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012), described as an "eccentric pubescent love story," have been Anderson's most commercially successful films so far, although his stop-motion adaptation of Roald Dahl's *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* (2009) was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature. More recently, Anderson produced *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), focused on the misadventures of a famous Central European concierge during the 1930s, making "a marvelous mockery of history," according to the *New York Times,* and winning multiple awards. The noirish eccentricity found in the work of Russell, Jonze, Payne, and Anderson suggests that American film comedy has recently turned toward sophisticated absurdism and away from the broad, sometimes vulgar humor of the past.

Two other American directors who occasionally evoke a dark comic strain are Richard Linklater (b. 1960) and Paul Thomas Anderson (b. 1970). In 1985, Linklater founded the Austin Film Society and subsequently made many short experimental films for the festival circuit. His first feature, *Slacker* (1991), was made for $23,000, grossed more than $1.25 million, and earned him a cult reputation in the independent film world. This virtually plotless film, which



Ralph Fiennes, Saoirse Ronan, and Tony Revolori in *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (Wes Anderson, 2014).

follows eccentrics and bohemians around the streets of Austin, was followed by *Dazed and Confused* (1993), a coming-of-age comedy, based on his own high school years. The film made only $8 million at the box office but increased his prestige as an independent writer-director when a number of critics ranked it on their "Ten Best Films" lists of the year.

In 1995, Linklater won the Silver Bear for Best Director at the 45th Berlin International Film Festival for the romantic comedy *Before Sunrise*, which takes place in the course of a single night and whose story line was continued in *Before Sunset* (2004) and *Before Midnight* (2013). His philosophical rotoscoped films, *Waking Life* (2001) and *A Scanner Darkly* (2006), the latter based on a science fiction novel by Phillip K. Dick, won Linklater a more mainstream following, as did his comedy *School of Rock* (2003) and his remake of *Bad News Bears* (2005). *Fast Food Nation* (2006) is a dramatic feature loosely based on Eric Schlosser's nonfiction book of the same name; it was deemed too polemical for commercial success, but *Me and Orson Welles* (2008) won critical esteem for its dynamic depiction of the Mercury Theater's 1937 production of Welles's antifascist *Julius Caesar*, as did the extraordinary *Boyhood* (2014), which was shot intermittently during a twelve-year period, as its protagonist grew from childhood to manhood. Unlike most of Linklater's films, which are relatively unstructured from a narrative perspective and take place within the course of a single day, *Boyhood* was a groundbreaking coming-of-age tale, shot in Austin in forty-nine days, from 2002 to 2013. (This film was nominated for the Academy Awards for Best Director and Best Screenplay, and Patricia Arquette won Best Supporting Actress for her role.) Although he has worked for several major distributors over time, Linklater remains a true independent, preferring to work whenever possible from his home base in Texas.

Paul Thomas Anderson—like Wes Anderson—is not to be confused with the more popular director Brad Anderson (b. 1964), who has nevertheless

produced some interesting work, for example, *Next Stop Wonderland* (1998), *Session 9* (2001), *The Machinist* (2004), *Transsiberian* (2008), and *The Call* (2013). Paul Thomas Anderson became interested in filmmaking at an early age and made his first feature, the neo-noir crime thriller *Hard Eight*, in 1996. His critical and commercial breakthrough, however, came with *Boogie Nights* (1997), a revealing look at the Golden Age of 35mm porn films in the 1970s and the way in which they were replaced by videotape in the 1980s. Now a recognized writer-producer-director, Anderson next made *Magnolia* (1999), a multiplotted mosaic of characters searching for meaning in the San Fernando Valley (which is kind of a contradiction in terms), and the comedy-drama *Punch-Drunk Love* (2002), for which he won the Best Director prize at Cannes.

Unquestionably, his most powerful film was the epic American saga *There Will Be Blood* (2007), loosely based on Upton Sinclair's 1927 muckraker *Oil!* about a silver miner who becomes a ruthless oil baron in the Southern California of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The film received nearly universal critical praise and garnered numerous award nominations, including many for its score by Radiohead's Johnny Greenwood. For example, Andrew Sarris called it "an impressive achievement in its confident expertness in rendering the simulated realities of a bygone time and place." Less enthusiasm greeted *The Master* (2002), partly inspired by the life of the founder of Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard, which contained the last major performance by the actor Philip Seymour Hoffman (1967–2014) in the title role. *The Master* was shot on 65mm film stock, making it the first film to be released in 70mm since Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* (1996). Anderson's seventh film was *Inherent Vice* (2014), a darkly comic crime drama based on the novel by Thomas Pynchon.

Other American Auteurs

Other American filmmakers who have made major contributions to the cinema of the 2000s and the 2010s are David Fincher (b. 1962), Steven Soderbergh (b. 1963), and Joel and Ethan Coen (b. 1954 and 1957, respectively). The British-American director Christopher Nolan (b. in London, 1970) has played a similarly important role. At the same time, women filmmakers such as Kathryn Bigelow (b. 1951) and Sofia Coppola (b. 1971) and black directors such as Spike Lee (b. 1957) and Steve McQueen (b. in London, 1969) have also had a significant impact, often working independently of the Hollywood system.

After making several successful music videos, television commercials, and PSAs, David Fincher directed his first feature, *Alien 3*, in 1992. Although it was not well received by critics, the film received an Oscar nomination for special effects and ultimately led New Line Cinema to produce Fincher's sensational *Se7en* (1995; also known as *Seven*), the story of two cops pursuing a serial killer who grounds his murders in the seven deadly sins. After middling success with *The Game* (1997) and *Fight Club* (1999), he scored a solid hit with the mainstream thriller *Panic Room* (2002), which Fincher described as a "really good B movie about two people trapped in a closet."

Five years later, he directed the chillingly precise *Zodiac* (2007), based on books by Robert Graystone about the hunt for the Zodiac Killer. Shot with a digital camera (the Viper Film Stream), this film presented a remarkable CGI reconstruction of late-1970s and early-1980s San Francisco, and it contained award-winning performances by Jake Gyllenhaal, Mark Ruffalo, and Robert Downey Jr. In its tale of a journalist and a CID investigator who become overwhelmingly obsessed with solving the case (which remains unsolved), *Zodiac* was a film of considerable moral complexity that suggested that, in reality, the good guys don't always win and are sometimes punished for their efforts. *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (2008), adapted from the short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald, also used abundant CGI in its tale of a man who ages backward, and it was nominated for thirteen Academy Awards, winning three—Best Art Direction, Best Makeup, and Best Visual Effects.

Next, Fincher tackled the story of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg in *The Social Network* (2010). Its Oscar-winning screenplay by Aaron Sorkin was based on the book *The Accidental Billionaires*; it featured a young ensemble cast, and won many awards—four Golden Globes and three Academy Awards, including one for its score by Atticus Ross and Trent Reznor's Nine Inch Nails. Its portrait of Zuckerberg (played by Jesse Eisenberg) as a socially alienated loner brought a fine irony to the film that caused *Rolling Stone* to remark of Fincher and Sorkin, "Lacing their scathing wit with an aching sadness, they define the dark irony of the past decade." Fincher then directed the American version of Stieg Larsson's international best-seller *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011), whose tone was darker and grimmer than the original 2009 Swedish version by Niels Arden Oplev; shot on location in London,



Brad Pitt in *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999).

New York, and Sweden, the film was a huge commercial success and won multiple awards, including an Oscar for Best Film Editing. After serving as executive producer and occasional director for the Netflix cable series *House of Cards* (2013), Fincher went on to direct the American mystery-thriller *Gone Girl*, based on Gillian Flynn's 2012 darkly witty novel, which, like *The Social Network*, is scored by Ross and Reznor.

Steven Soderbergh had his breakthrough success with the independently produced *sex, lies, and videotape*, which he wrote in eight days in 1989. The film won the Palme d'Or at Cannes that year, making Soderbergh, at twenty-six, the youngest director to win the award, and it became a worldwide commercial success that contributed significantly to the 1990s independent film revolution. After a series of low-budget box-office disappointments—*Kafka* (1991), *King of the Hill* (1993), *The Underneath* (1996), and *Schizopolis* (1996)—Soderbergh enjoyed modest commercial success with a stylized version of an Elmore Leonard novel starring George Clooney and Jennifer Lopez, *Out of Sight* (1998). Following with another metafictional crime caper, *The Limey* (1999) in 2000, Soderbergh directed both *Erin Brockovich*, starring Julia Roberts as a single mother who takes on a giant energy corporation; and *Traffic*, a documentary-like crime melodrama that explores the illegal drug trade from a number of different angles.

Both films were huge international hits, and Soderbergh became the first filmmaker in history to be nominated for Best Direction for two films simultaneously by the Academy Awards, the Golden Globes, and the Directors Guild of America. (Two years later, Soderbergh was elected first vice president of the DGA.) He then directed his highest-grossing film to date, *Ocean's Eleven* (2001), a remake of a Rat-Pack movie from 1960, starring George Clooney, with whom he would continue to collaborate in *Solaris* (2002), a remake of Andrei Tarkovsky's 1976 science-fiction classic; *The Good German* (2006), a noirish melodrama set in postwar Berlin; and the star-studded sequel *Ocean's Thirteen* (2007). In 2003, Clooney had served as co-producer for Soderbergh's ten-part HBO political series *K Street*, and with *Che*, the director entered the world of international politics. Released in two parts—*The Argentine* and *Guerrilla*—this film starred Benicio



Don Cheadle, George Clooney, Shaobo Qin, and Casey Affleck in *Ocean's Eleven* (Steven Soderbergh, 2001).

Del Toro in the title role of Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and it focused on his role in the Cuban Revolution before venturing into his final campaign and death in Bolivia.

This four-hour epic was followed by *The Girlfriend Experience* (2009), an experimental drama shot on location with the relatively inexpensive Red One digital camera system about the life of a New York City call girl in the several days leading up to the 2008 presidential election. The black comedy *The Informant!* (2009) starred Matt Damon as a high-level whistle blower at a Fortune 500 company, while *Haywire* (2012) was an action adventure originally shot in 2010. In between, Soderbergh made the widely acclaimed virus thriller *Contagion* (2011), which followed the spread of a lethal global pandemic and the efforts of scientists to find a cure; *Magic Mike* (2012), starring Tatum Channing, about the actor's experience of working as a male stripper during his youth; *Side Effects* (2013), a medical/psychiatric thriller fashioned around the presumed contra-indications of a new antidepressant drug called Ablixa; and *Behind the Candelabra*, starring Michael Douglas as the flagrantly gay pianist Liberace and Matt Damon as his lover Scott Thomson.

After this, Soderbergh took a much publicized "sabbatical" from feature filmmaking to become the producer–director of a ten-part miniseries for Cinemax titled *The Knick* (2014), based on activities at the famed Knickerbocker Hospital in Manhattan at the turn of the twentieth century; the series was renewed for a second season in 2015. Since that time, he has said much about the obstacles facing filmmakers in the current Hollywood corporate environment and has devoted a considerable amount of time to his Extension 765 website, where, among other things, he has released a mashup of Alfred Hitchcock's and Gus Van Sant's versions of *Psycho* (1960 and 1998, respectively), as well as a so-called Butcher's Cut of Michael Cimino's troubled Western *Heaven's Gate* (1980), reducing the two-hundred-and-sixteen-minute epic to half its length in an obsessive labor of love.

After a number of highly original film noirs in color, such as *Blood Simple* (1984), *Miller's Crossing* (1990), *Barton Fink* (1991), and *Fargo* (1996); and screwball comedies, such as *Raising Arizona* (1987), *The Hudsucker Proxy* (1994), and *The Big Lebowski* (1998), Joel and Ethan Coen began the 2000s with *O Brother,*

Where Art Thou? (2000), a satirical version of Homer's *The Odyssey*, which also refers to Preston Sturges's 1941 satire *Sullivan's Travels*, whose main character is a director wanting to make a film with that title about the Great Depression. The Coens, who typically write, produce, edit, and direct their own films, followed with *The Man Who Wasn't There* (2001), another neo-noir, this one shot in black and white (it was actually shot on color stock and pulled down to black and white by DP Roger Deakins in printing) and starring Billy Bob Thornton as a small-town barber circa 1949 who becomes enmeshed in a murder plot.

Intolerable Cruelty (2003) is a black "rom com" set in Los Angeles about divorce and lawyers, starring George Clooney and Catherine Zeta-Jones. *The Lady Killers* (2004), on which the brothers shared the direction credit for the first time, was a remake of Alexander Mackendrick's Ealing Studios black comedy of 1955, with Tom Hanks in the Alec Guinness role. Like their previous two films, *The Lady Killers* was heavily influenced by the 1940s work of Preston Sturges, with whom they share a certain DNA, but it was only a middling success with critics and public alike. *No Country for Old Men* (2007), conversely, was called by Roger Ebert "as good a film as the Coen brothers have ever made." Based on the Cormac McCarthy novel of the same name, it is a neo-Western thriller about an ordinary man who accidentally receives a fortune and is chased across the length and breadth of 1980 West Texas by criminals seeking to recover it. In its themes of fate, conscience, and circumstance, *No Country for Old Men* recalls *Blood Simple* and *Fargo* and was compared favorably with the landscape-based classicism of Anthony Mann and Sam Peckinpah.

Reviews were mixed for the savagely ironic espionage thriller *Burn after Reading* (2008) and the dark comedy *A Serious Man* (2009), which was the tenth Coen brothers film shot by the British cinematographer Roger Deakins. No such doubts accompanied *True Grit* (2010), the second adaptation of Charles Portis's 1968 novel (after Henry Hathaway's 1969 version, starring John Wayne). It was nominated for ten Academy Awards, including one for Jeff Bridges in the role of U.S. Marshall "Rooster" Cogburn, originally played by Wayne. Critic Kenneth Turan of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote of it: "The Coens, not known for softening anything, have restored the original's bleak, elegiac conclusion. . . . Clearly recognizing a kindred spirit in Portis, sharing his love for eccentric characters and odd language, they worked hard, and successfully, at serving the buoyant novel as well as being true to their own black comic brio."

Similarly, *Inside Llewyn Davis* (2013) received numerous critical accolades. The film follows one week in the life of a Dylanesque folk singer in Greenwich Village, circa 1961. Although fiction, it was partly inspired by the autobiography of Dave Van Ronk, and most of the songs performed in the film were recorded live. The film won the Grand Prix at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival and was nominated for two Academy Awards and four Golden Globes. Yet dissenting voices found the film too dark for comedy; for example, the *Village Voice* wrote, "While often funny and alive with winning performances, *Inside Llewyn Davis* finds the brothers in a dark mood, exploring the near-inevitable disappointment that faces artists too sincere to compromise." Currently, Joel and Ethan Coen are executive producers of *Fargo*, a TV series based on their 1996 film.

Christopher Nolan is a British-American director who began his career with the festival favorite *Following* (1998), a neo-noir set in London, which he shot on 16mm with a $6,000 budget. His next film, *Memento* (2000), focused on a man suffering from a debilitating short-term memory loss and was told backward. The success of these two independent features afforded Nolan the opportunity to direct the big-budget psychological crime drama *Insomnia* (2002, a remake of Erik Skjoldbjærg's 1997 Norwegian film of the same title), starring Al Pacino as a police detective whose sleeplessness is driven by some unnamed guilt during his hunt for a serial killer in an Alaskan town. This film attracted considerable critical praise and was a commercial hit, as was *The Prestige* (2006), concerning rival professional magicians at the turn of the twentieth century who strive to best each other by creating the most convincing stage illusion, with tragic results.

The director was now poised to enter the Hollywood big leagues with his brooding Dark Knight trilogy—*Batman Begins* (2005), *The Dark Knight* (2008), and *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012)—among the most intelligent and technologically sophisticated superhero blockbusters of their time. Nolan continued to probe the dark side of the mind with the dazzlingly complicated dream-drama *Inception* (2010). This box-office sleeper grossed $800 million worldwide and was nominated for eight Academy Awards, winning four of them (Best Cinematography, Best Sound Editing, Best Sound Mixing, and Best Visual Effects). Like the rest

(right) Jeff Bridges in *True Grit* (Joel Coen and Ethan Coen, 2010).





Leonardo DiCaprio in *Inception* (Christopher Nolan, 2010).

of Nolan's work, *Inception* was concerned with notions of reality and identity, although some accused its "dream-within-a-dream" metaphor of complexity for its own sake. More recently, Nolan directed the science-fiction thriller *Interstellar* (2014), about astronauts who travel through a wormhole, which was filmed with a combination of anamorphic 35mm and IMAX 70mm lenses.

Kathryn Bigelow initially studied painting at the San Francisco Art Institute, earning her BFA in 1972. She subsequently entered the graduate film program at Columbia University, where she studied history, theory, and criticism and received an MA. After a number of shorts, Bigelow made her feature debut with the independent outlaw biker film *The Loveless* (1982), which she co-directed with Monty Montgomery. Next, she made the hybrid vampire-Western *Near Dark* (1987), which she co-wrote with Eric Red. Although it was not successful at the box office, this film was hailed by critics and has since become a cult item.

Bigelow next produced a trilogy of action films: *Blue Steel* (1990) concerns a young female police officer who is stalked by a serial killer, and it raises serious questions about the relationship between domestic violence and crime. *Point Break* (1991; a 3-D remake was released by Warner Bros. in 2015) is a gorgeously shot (by Donald Peterman) thriller about an FBI agent who goes undercover as a surf bum to infiltrate a gang of surfing bank robbers, known as the "Ex-Presidents" for the LBJ, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan masks they wore in the course of their crimes. As absurd as it sounds, this generic action-adventure film strikes a deeper level about the meaning of risk in a risk-free society. So, too, did *Strange Days* (1995), a critical success but a commercial failure about a future world in which criminal (or any) experiences can be downloaded like pornography into the brains of "normal" citizens for their vicarious pleasure.

After *The Weight of Water* (2000), a cross between domestic melodrama and murder mystery shot on location in Nova Scotia, and a straight Cold War action thriller, *K-19: The Widowmaker* (2002), Bigelow directed the universally acclaimed Iraq War film *The Hurt Locker* (2009), focusing on the activities of a bomb disposal unit near the conflict's end. Winner of the 2010 Academy Award for Best Picture, this film also won the



Leslie Hayman, Kirsten Dunst, A. J. Cook, and Chelse Swain in *The Virgin Suicides* (Sofia Coppola, 1999).

Academy Award for Best Director, making Bigelow the first woman to win, and the fourth woman nominated, in the history of the Academy. Among many other honors, she also won the Directors Guild of America Award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement and the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Director, becoming the first woman to win those awards as well.

In 2012, Bigelow directed *Zero Dark Thirty*, a dramatization of American efforts to capture Osama Bin Laden that became highly controversial because of its apparent endorsement of torture in gaining information from terror suspects. Shot in a jittery, handheld style like its predecessor, *Zero Dark Thirty* also won numerous accolades for Bigelow, including the National Board of Review Award for Best Director, another first for a woman filmmaker.

Sofia Coppola got her start in movies by appearing as a young actress in her father's films. She had small roles in each installment of Francis Ford Coppola's Godfather saga, culminating in *Part III* (1989), in which she played a supporting part. After making several independent shorts, Sofia made her debut feature with *The Virgin Suicides* (1999), produced by her father, which she adapted from a novel of the same title by Jeffrey Eugenides. It tells the story of the mysterious suicides of five daughters from the same upper-middle-class midwestern family, and was critically well received.

Coppola's second feature was *Lost in Translation* (2003), for which she won the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay. This romantic comedy-drama concerns the relationship between an aging actor and a recent college graduate who meet by chance in a Tokyo hotel. The title refers to the cultural alienation of the two characters, as much as to the actual language differences that they encounter in the "floating world" of contemporary urban Japan. As film critic Andrew Sarris wrote in the *New York Observer*, "The result is that rarity of rarities, a grown-up romance based on the deliberate repression of sexual gratification." In addition to its Oscar, the film also won the Golden Globes for Best Musical or Comedy Motion Picture,



Do the Right Thing (Spike Lee, 1989).

Best Screenplay, and Best Musical or Comedy Actor (to Bill Murray).

Next, Coppola essayed the highly stylized biopic *Marie Antoinette* (2006), which many critics took to task for playing in the manner of a pop video. Yet Roger Ebert astutely observed that it was her third film "centering on the loneliness of being female and surrounded by a world that knows how to use you but not how to value or understand you."

Coppola's fourth film, *Somewhere* (2010), premiered at the 67th Venice International Film Festival, where it received the Golden Lion for Best Picture. This ironic comedy-drama was filmed on location at the Chateau Marmont, where a famously irresponsible actor is recuperating from a minor injury and forced into caring for his estranged eleven-year-old daughter. In the process, he ultimately accepts his new adult role, while the film riffs obliquely on the phenomenon of Hollywood fame and stardom. More recently, Coppola wrote, produced, and directed *The Bling Ring* (2013), a satire based on the exploits of the real "Bling Ring," a group of California teenagers who burgled the homes of celebrities such as Paris Hilton during a period of several years, eventually pocketing about $3 million in cash and belongings and ending up in jail. The film opened the Un Certain Regard section of the 2013 Cannes Film Festival, where it was widely praised for its ensemble performances.

Shelton Jackson "Spike" Lee received an MFA in film and television from New York University and directed his first feature with *She's Gotta Have It* (1986), which he also wrote and produced. Focused on an attractive young black woman who cherishes her personal freedom, the film shows her juggling three separate sexual partners while refusing to commit to any of them. This landmark of independent film was made in two weeks for $175,000, and it grossed more than $7 million domestically. It was a breakthrough for African American filmmakers in its unprecedented representation of urban blacks as sophisticated, accomplished human beings. Similarly, *School Daze* (1988) shows fraternity and sorority members in conflict with other students during homecoming weekend at a historically black college, evoking issues of racism related to skin color and hair texture within the African American community at large.

Yet Lee's definitive film on race was his third feature, *Do the Right Thing* (1989). Like *School Daze*, it was written, produced, and directed by Lee, and it tells the story of a Brooklyn neighborhood's simmering racial tension, which comes to a boil and culminates in violence on the hottest day of summer. Widely acclaimed (and earning Academy Award nominations for Best Original Screenplay and Best Supporting Actor), *Do the Right Thing* was nevertheless highly controversial. While many reviewers argued that it could incite black race riots, Lee shot back that (mainly white) reviewers were implying that black audiences couldn't control themselves while watching a fictional motion picture.

After *Mo' Better Blues* (1990), a drama about a fictional jazz trumpeter that featured the music of the Branford Marsalis quartet, and the interracial romantic drama *Jungle Fever* (1991), Lee wrote, produced, and directed *Malcolm X* (1992), a biopic of the radical black activist, which starred Denzel Washington in the title role. Based largely on Alex Haley's book *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965), the film dramatizes the main events of his life and concludes with his assassination on February 21, 1965. For his part, Washington won the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Actor and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actor. Next, Lee wrote, produced, and directed the semiautobiographical *Crooklyn* (1994), set in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood during the summer of 1973, and the crime drama *Clockers* (1995), which tells the story of a street-level drug dealer who is accused of murder.

He then made a series of films written by others, including *Get on the Bus* (1996), *Girl 6* (1996), and *Four Little Girls* (1997), an account of the 1963 murder of four black children in the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, which was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary. Although he continued to write, produce, and direct his own work—for example, *He Got Game*



Michael Fassbender and Chiwetel Ejiofor in *12 Years a Slave* (Steve McQueen, 2013).

(1998), *Summer of Sam* (1999), *Bamboozled* (2000), *She Hate Me* (2004), and *Red Hook Summer* (2012)—Lee increasingly adapted the work of other screenwriters in films such as *Inside Man* (2006) and *Old Boy* (2013), a remake of Park Chan-wook's 2003 Korean cult film. Out of the mainstream again in 2014, he wrote, produced, and directed *Da Sweet Blood of Jesus*, an independent horror comedy bankrolled through the global crowdfunding platform Kickstarter. Lee's films are typically called "Spike Lee Joints," he frequently casts himself in them, and he remains the central creative force behind them all.

Steve McQueen is an award-winning British conceptual artist who often uses film in his installations, and he produced a series of critically acclaimed shorts before he made his first feature, *Hunger*, in 2008. Set in Northern Ireland's notorious Maze Prison during the 1981 hunger strike, in which ten IRA prisoners starved themselves to death, the film offered a version of events that was simultaneously grim and courageous. One critic called it "a powerful and provocative piece of work, which leaves a zero-degree burn on the retina." Like McQueen's next two features, *Hunger* contained an extraordinary lead performance by Michael Fassbender (b. 1977), which won the actor international recognition.

In *Shame* (2011), Fassbender starred as a successful New York executive struggling with the problem of sexual addiction. The film was admired for its unflinching depiction of a self-destructive psychological obsession, but it was not as widely praised as McQueen's third feature, *12 Years a Slave* (2013), in which Fassbender played a sadistic southern planter. Based on an 1853 slave narrative, the film starred Chiwetel Ejiofor as a free African American who was kidnapped in Washington, D.C., and sold into bondage lasting more than a decade on several different Louisiana plantations. With it, McQueen became the first black filmmaker to receive an Academy Award for Best Picture. He is currently working with HBO and BBC to develop a television series based on the lives of black Britons, and he also is planning a feature with Michael Fassbender, based on the life of the Irish gypsy Bartley Gorman, who became the most famous bare-knuckle fighter in modern Britain between 1972 and 1992. McQueen often produces and writes his own films, and he has occasionally appeared in them.

Shape of the Future

It seems clear that the Hollywood megapicture will continue to dominate the world's theater screens through the process still somewhat naively known as "globalization." Yet it is equally clear that motion pictures are no longer primarily consumed on theatrical screens. Mobile, online, and streaming consumption of motion pictures liberates the cinema from the blockbuster syndrome in the direction of independence. Furthermore, the international influence of the Bollywood musical, Japanese and Korean horror films, and "extreme cinema" from France, for example, ensure that stylistically, at least, "abroad" will always signify something more than just a major Hollywood market. The increasing consumption of "slow cinema" and the practice of "binge viewing"—although they stem from seemingly different psychological motivations—suggest that long-form motion pictures loom prominently on the horizon. And the proliferation of digital technologies of production and distribution (not only in theaters but through online institutions, such as YouTube and Vimeo) promise the democratization of those practices, even as corporate mergers produce ever more gargantuan media/entertainment conglomerates.

The future of the cinema is thus what it has always been: the impulse to hegemonize the global audience is undercut by the same technological innovation that permits conglomeration—for example, the coming of sound and now digital. Yet so long as it continues to tell stories, however long or short, the cinema will survive as a basic and profoundly human combination of individual will and corporate power.

Glossary

180-degree system The method of filming action that ensures continuity in the spatial relationships between objects on-screen. The camera must stay on one side of an imaginary 180-degree line, or axis of action, that runs through the center of the set or from one side of the frame to the other. See **continuity editing.**

2-D cloning The process by which an image is copied from one position or shot and scanned into another. This technique is often utilized in wire removal to clone the image from either side of an unsightly apparatus and then to use the copied image to fill in over the wire's pixels.

Academy aperture The frame size established by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to standardize the sound film in 1932. It indicates an aspect ratio of 4:3 or 1.33:1 (the actual projector aperture plate aspect ratio was 1.37:1). See **widescreen.**

accelerated montage A sequence made up of shots of increasingly shorter lengths that creates a psychological atmosphere of excitement and tension. See **montage** and **parallel action.**

accelerated motion See **fast motion**.

aerial shot A shot from above, usually made from a plane, helicopter, or crane. See **crane shot.**

"agit-Guignol" Eisenstein's term for agitational effects involving shocking violence; it is derived from the Grand Guignol, a theater in Paris (1897–1962) that specialized in the realistic depiction of murder and torture.

analog A term used to describe any process that attempts to mimic the waveforms of an original signal, such as radio frequencies or video signals. Unlike digital information, analog data are continuously variable, without discrete steps or quantization.

anamorphic lens A lens that squeezes a wide image to fit the dimensions of a standard 35mm film frame. In projection, an anamorphic lens reverses the process and redistributes the wide image on the screen. See **widescreen.**

animatics Animated storyboards composed of rough drawings or computer-generated characters that are composited with video recording or live-action scenes to give both actors and digital artists a guide for the positioning of characters and other CGI in the final composite.

animation All techniques that make inanimate objects move on-screen, such as drawing directly on the film, individually photographing animation cells, and photographing the objects one frame at a time while adjusting their position between frames. See **pixillation** and **stop-motion photography.**

animation "chains" Linkages that allow for synchronicity among linked objects in computer graphics. See **inverse kinematics.**

animation software A computer program designed for creating and animating three-dimensional graphics. Popular examples include Maya and Houdini.

animatronic puppetry Electronic mechanical puppetry used for a live-action shoot—controlled by hand, remote, cable, or computer.

arc light The source of high-energy illumination on the movie set and in the projector; the principal source of film lighting during the 1920s and for three-strip Technicolor. It is produced by an electric current that arcs across the gap between two pieces of carbon (the direct-current carbon arc) or, more recently, by

a mercury arc between tungsten electrodes sealed in a glass bulb (the alternating-current arc or the Hydrargyum Medium Arc-Length Iodide [HMI] globe).

armature The skeletal framework of a stop-motion puppet or model with articulated joints.

Arriflex A light, portable camera first used in the late 1950s; it was essential to the mobile, handheld photography of the New Wave and still is to most contemporary cinematography. Mitchell cameras, however, are the industry's workhorses. See **handheld shot.**

art director The person responsible for set design and graphics.

art houses Small theaters that sprang up in major cities across the United States during the 1950s to show "art films" (foreign films with intellectual and aesthetic aspirations), as opposed to "commercial films" (all American films except for occasional experimental productions such as *Citizen Kane*)—a distinction that can no longer be made.

aspect ratio The ratio of the width to the height of the cinematic image, or frame. The Academy aperture standard through 1952 was 1.33:1; contemporary widescreen ratios vary, but the most common are 1.66:1 (Europe) and 1.85:1 (United States). Anamorphic processes such as CinemaScope can range from 2.00:1 to 2.55:1. See **widescreen.**

associative editing The cutting together of shots to establish their metaphorical or symbolic—as opposed to their narrative—relationship. A prime example is the prehistoric bone that becomes a futuristic space station in Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). See **match cut.**

asynchronous sound Also called *contrapuntal sound.* Sound that does not proceed directly from the film image. See **synchronous sound.**

audion Lee de Forest's vacuum tube, which first permitted amplification of audio signals for large audiences.

auteur A director or another creative intelligence with a recognizable and distinctive style who is considered the prime "author" of a film. See ***politique des auteurs.***

back projection See **rear projection**.

backlighting Lighting directed at the camera from behind the subject, thus silhouetting the subject. See **fill light** and **key light.**

back lots Large tracts of open land owned by the studios and used to simulate various locations.

B-films Also called *B-features* or *B-pictures*. Films that were made cheaply and quickly. They were used to fill the bottom half of a double bill when double features were standard.

biopic A biographical film, especially the kind produced by Warner Bros. in the 1930s and the 1940s.

bleach-bypass A color-film developing technique that skips most or all of the bleaching process, retaining the silver halide on the negative; this increases contrast and grain, desaturates the color, and produces blacker blacks in the print image.

blimp An awkward soundproofing cover for the camera, first used in the early years of sound. Most cameras today are constructed with their own internal soundproofing.

block booking The practice whereby distributors forced exhibitors to rent a production company's films in large groups, or blocks, tied to several desirable titles in advance of production. Initiated by Adolph Zukor in 1916, block booking became fundamental to the studio-system monopoly, but it was ruled illegal by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1948 as part of the Paramount decrees. Elements of block booking persist in the practice of blind bidding for films in the preproduction stage, a source of constant complaint among contemporary exhibitors.

blockbuster A film that is enormously popular or one that was so costly to make that it must be enormously successful to make a profit. The first blockbusters were probably Italian superspectacles such as *Cabiria* (Giovanni Pastrone, 1914), followed by D. W. Griffith's epics *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916). During the 1920s, films such as *The Thief of Bagdad* (Raoul Walsh, 1924) and *Ben Hur* (Fred Niblo, 1925) were conceived and marketed as blockbusters, as was David O. Selznick's *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) in the sound era. In the 1950s and the 1960s, the epic-scale widescreen blockbusters, such as Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* (1923), became a veritable genre. More recent examples include the record-breaking *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975), *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Spielberg, 1981), and, of course, Warner Bros.' paradigmatic *Batman* (Tim Burton, 1989).

bluescreen photography A special-effects process that involves shooting live action, models, or miniatures in front of a bright blue (or green) screen,

leaving the background of the shot unexposed. This produces footage that can be later composited with other elements, such as traveling mattes, into the primary film. See **matte shot.**

boom A mobile arm that suspends the microphone or camera above the actors and outside the frame.

broadcast The transmission of an electromagnetic signal over a widely dispersed area.

"bullet-time" photography Also called *Flow-Mo*. Pioneered by Wachowski siblings in *The Matrix* (1999), it is a technique that enables filmmakers to change the speed of moving objects in progress. First, an actual movement is filmed and scanned into a computer to create a wireframe of the person or the object from which its trajectory is mapped. Then a battery of still cameras is placed along this path, and the movement is photographed again as a series of sequential stills. These are scanned into the computer, which arranges them in the manner of a film strip so that they can be digitally manipulated to reproduce the movement at varying speeds.

cable television The transmission of television signals via wire, instead of broadcast radio waves. Although it was originally developed to permit television transmission to special geographical areas, it has become a popular alternative to broadcast television.

Cahiers du cinéma Literally, "Cinema notebooks." A Paris-based film journal founded in 1951 by André Bazin and Jacques Doniol-Valcroze that featured important articles by future directors of the French New Wave. It is still published.

calligraphism A term adopted by the neorealist director and critic Giuseppe De Santis to designate a style of interwar Italian filmmaking devoted to the formally meticulous adaptation of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century fiction; neorealists associated it with the decadence of the Fascist cinema.

camera angle The perspective that the camera takes on the subject being shot; three most common are low angle, high angle, and tilt angle.

caméra-stylo Literally, "camera pen." A phrase first used by Alexandre Astruc in 1948 to suggest that cinema could be as multidimensional and personal as the older literary arts.

Cari software (or Caricature software) Developed by Industrial Light & Magic effects artist Cary Phillips for *Dragonheart* (Rob Cohen, 1996), it is an animation software that permits the creation of a fully rendered figure rather than its wireframe, enabling artists to envision the way their images will look on-screen as they create them. It also facilitates more complicated facial expressions and movements, as evident in the *Dragonheart's* talking dragon, Draco. Phillips updated Cari later for Tim Burton's *Mars Attacks!* (1996) to allow for the creation of up to twenty computer-generated characters at once, radically reducing postproduction time.

CCD (charge-coupled device) input scanner A device used for scanning film images into digital form. The CCD input scanner uses a light-sensitive semiconductor chip (a charge-coupled device) to capture the image. When the charge-coupled device is struck by light, the color and brightness information is converted into digital information.

CGI Standard abbreviation for computer-generated imagery. Also known as *digital effects*.

chanbara A Japanese sword-fight film.

chiaroscuro The artistic technique of arranging light and dark elements in pictorial composition.

cinéaste An artistically committed filmmaker.

Cinecittà The largest Italian studio complex in Rome.

cinéma direct The predominant documentary style in the United States since the early 1960s. It is similar to—or, some argue, the same as—*cinéma vérité* in that it uses light, mobile equipment, but it stringently avoids narration or participation on the part of the filmmaker.

cinema novo Literally, "new cinema." Politically committed Brazilian cinema of the 1960s.

CinemaScope The trade name used by 20th Century–Fox for its anamorphic widescreen process. The word is frequently used today to refer to all anamorphic processes.

Cinémathèque Française Established in 1936 in Paris by Henri Langlois and Georges Franju, it is reputed to have the world's largest film library. By making older classics available to the public, it is also said to have influenced the style and themes of French films in the 1950s and the 1960s.

Cinématographe The camera-projector-printer invented by the Lumière brothers in 1895. See **Kinetograph.**

cinematographer The director of photography (DP) or lighting cameraman (British), who is responsible for the camera technique and the lighting of a film in production.

cinematography Motion-picture photography.

cinéma vérité Literally, "cinema truth," and the French translation of Dziga Vertov's *kino-pravda*. Originally used in postwar France to describe a particular kind of cinema that utilizes lightweight equipment, small crews, and direct interviews. The term is now used more casually to refer to any documentary technique. See ***cinéma direct*** and **documentary.**

cinéphile A person who loves cinema.

Cinerama A widescreen process invented by Fred Waller that requires three electronically synchronized cameras. It was first used in the 1952 film *This Is Cinerama,* but abandoned in 1962 in favor of an anamorphic process marketed under the same name.

close-up In its precise meaning, a shot of a human subject's face or other object alone; more generally, any close shot.

color-correction technology Computer technology used to modify the color; degree of contrast; highlights; or shadows of video, film, or digital images.

colorization Any practice by which black-and-white films are modified to include color.

color timing The color balance of an image or a scene, or any process used to color-correct or balance an image or a scene, so that color continuity is maintained throughout the film.

compilation film A film whose shots, scenes, and sequences come from other films, often archival newsreel footage; *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (Esther Shub, 1927) is an early example.

computer-generated character A film character that is completely computer-generated. These characters are often integrated into live-action scenes, such as the withered Gollum in Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings trilogy (2001–2003), as well as made to star in CGI environments, such as the "synthespians" in Andrew Adamson's *Shrek* (2001) and Hironobu Sakaguchi's *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* (2001).

computer-generated graphics Electronically generated animation, used since the late 1970s to provide credit sequences (*Superman*, 1978) and special effects (*The Abyss*, 1989) for theatrical films. It is also used in television commercials and for network logos.

computer-generated imagery See **CGI**.

Constructivism A movement in the theater arts closely related to Futurism. It advocated the use of modern architectural and/or mechanical set designs to express three-dimensionality.

continuity The final editing structure of a completed film. Also refers to arranging events by editing as if they had occurred continuously when in fact they were shot out of sequence.

continuity editing Editing shots together imperceptibly so that the action of a sequence appears to be continuous. See **offscreen space** and **180-degree system.**

continuity script A film or a media script giving the complete action in detail, scene by scene, in the order in which it is to appear on-screen.

contract director A director who works on projects from contract to contract rather than on an annual salary, as was common under the studio system.

contrapuntal sound Also called *asynchronous sound*. Sound used in counterpoint, or contrast, to the image.

crane shot A shot taken from a mobile-crane device. See **aerial shot.**

credits The list of writers, actors, technical personnel, and production staff, usually appearing at the beginning or the end of a film.

crosscutting Juxtaposing shots from two or more sequences, actions, or stories to suggest parallel action, as did D. W. Griffith in *Intolerance* (1916).

cutting Moving from one image or shot to another by editing.

dailies See **rushes.**

das neue Kino See ***neue Kino, das.***

day for night The technique used to shoot night scenes during the day. The necessary effect is created by stopping down the lens aperture or by using special lens filters.

deep focus A technique that exploits depth of field to render subjects both near and far from the camera lens with equal clarity, and permits the composition of the image in depth. Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941) is one of the earliest and most famous films to use deep-focus shots as a basic structural element. See **shallow focus.**

definition A term used to describe the facility of film stock to articulate the separate elements of an image. See **resolution.**

depth of field The varying range of distances from the camera at which an object remains in sharp focus. See **focus plane.**

desaturated A term used to describe color-film images that are dull, washed out, and gray.

diaphragm Also called *iris diaphragm*. A louvered disk, located midway between the front and rear elements of a lens, with an opening (the aperture) that can be made smaller or larger to regulate the amount of light that passes through the lens. See ***f*-stop** and **lens aperture.**

digital compositing The process of digitally combining multiple-source images—such as live-action components, model shots, cloud and sky effects, digitally painted artwork, or computer-generated images—to produce an integrated result.

digital effects Also known as *CGI*. Effects created directly through computer imaging, so that the actual image is generated and/or manipulated by computer software. See **optical effects.**

digital file The series of binary numbers converted from the original light signal during digital image recording and then stored on disc. A digital file can be used to reconstruct the original image or manipulated by a computer through mathematical formulas to create a new one.

Digital Input Device (DID) Also known as the Dinosaur Input Device because it was developed by Craig Hayes and Phil Tippett to assist stop-motion model animators in creating computer animation for Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993). It is a metal puppet armature with electronic sensors at its pivot points that can generate a digital wireframe model in the computer when put through a series of maneuvers.

digital intermediate process The process by which a film negative is converted into digital files to undergo digital manipulation, such as color timing or the addition of computer-generated effects, before being converted back into film.

digital matte painting The use of computer paint programs to create photorealistic matte paintings—hand-painted images that are intended to be integrated with live-action footage—directly inside the computer, as opposed to traditional matte painting, which is accomplished outside the computer.

digital set Literally, a digital "set." A completely malleable digital environment within which computer animators can control such variables as lighting, camera position and movement, and the movement of objects.

direct sound Sound that is recorded simultaneously with the image. With modern developments such as portable tape recorders and soundproofed cameras, direct sound has become common.

director of photography (DP) See **cinematographer.**

dissolve Frequently called *lap dissolve*. A transitional or expressive device that superimposes a fade-out over a fade-in, so that one image seems to overlap with another. See **fade-out** and **wipe.**

documentary Coined by John Grierson in the 1920s to describe formally structured nonfiction films, such as those of Robert Flaherty. The term has come to mean any film that is not entirely fictional. See ***cinéma vérité.***

Dolby Named after its inventor, Ray Dolby, it is a system for audio recording and playback that reduces background noise and improves frequency response, adding 2½ octaves to the range. In motion-picture exhibition, it can be used to produce multitrack stereophonic sound optically or magnetically—an advantage because most exhibitors still use the less expensive optical playback equipment. Dolby was first used theatrically in rock-concert documentaries and rock musicals, such as Ken Russell's *Tommy* (1975). Francis Ford Coppola (*The Conversation* [1974]) and Robert Altman (*Nashville* [1975]) were the first directors to use it for strictly aesthetic ends, and *Star Wars* (1977) was the first widely released film recorded in Dolby throughout. Since 1977, Dolby has played an increasingly important role in films, innovating both surround sound (an extra channel that feeds rear and/or side speakers to envelop audiences with the sound field) and digital theater sound (Dolby Stereo Digital).

DP Standard abbreviation for director of photography.

dramedies A term for a subgenre of film and television that blends elements of drama and comedy.

dubbing The recording and postsynchronization of a dialogue or sound-effects track (e.g., foreign-language dubbing). See **postsynchronization.**

dye coupling A term used to describe the process whereby the globules of dye in the different emulsion layers of Technicolor film stock are coupled to silver grains; their dyes are released during the development of those grains.

Dynamation Created by visual-effects artist Ray Harryhausen (1920–2013), it is a form of stop-motion animation used mainly in the 1950s and the 1960s. Also refers to a 3-D computer graphics particle animation program sold by Alias/Wavefront, a Toronto-based software company that specializes in high-end CGI.

editor The person who supervises the splicing or cutting together of the shots of a film into their final structure.

electronic compositing The manipulation of film images in digital postproduction using nonlinear editing systems to retouch shots, composite synthetic images, or integrate separate photographic elements into one.

emulsion A thin, light-sensitive coating of chemicals covering the base of the film stock.

emulsion speed A measure of a film stock's sensitivity to light. According to a scale established by the American Standards Association (ASA), the faster emulsion speeds are more sensitive to light and have a higher ASA number.

establishing shot A shot, usually a long shot, that orients the audience in a film narrative by providing visual information, such as location, for the scene that follows.

exploitation film A negative term for a film aimed at a particular audience and designed to succeed commercially by appealing to specific psychological traits in that audience.

exposure The amount of light allowed to strike the surface of a film. Film can be underexposed to create dark, murky images or overexposed to create lighter ones.

Expressionism An artistic (including cinematic) style that seeks to express the artist's or auteur's private vision, emotional state, or subjective responses to objective reality; *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (1920) is an early Expressionist film.

extreme long shot A shot made from a considerable distance, sometimes as far away as a quarter of a mile. It provides a panoramic view of a location without camera movement. See **full shot** and **long shot.**

eyeline match A continuity-editing trope that shows the audience what a character is looking at. The eyeline of a character in one shot matches what he or she sees in the next shot. See **reverse-angle shot** and **shot-reverse-shot.**

face replacement The substitution of one actor's face for another's in computer graphic imaging. This technique is most often used to replace the face of a stunt double with that of the actor whose stunts he or she is performing.

fade-in A technique for beginning a scene whereby an image gradually appears on a blackened screen, then finally brightening into full visibility.

fade-out The opposite of fade-in. See **dissolve** and **wipe.**

fast motion Action filmed at less than 24 frames per second (standard sound-film speed), so that when the processed film is projected at normal speed the action appears accelerated. Most silent films were shot at close to 16 frames per second, so they display unintentional fast motion when projected at sound speed, as they frequently are today.

feature The main film in a program of several films, or any film over four reels in length (approximately forty-five minutes). Standard theatrical feature length is ninety to hundred-and-twenty minutes. See **short.**

fill light A secondary light that illuminates the subject from the side or that lights areas not lit by the key light. See **key light.**

film clip A short section of a film cut out of context, usually for the purpose of review or preview, or for making a compilation film.

film d'art A movement that began around 1908 in French cinema that attempted to produce exact records of stage productions (minus, of course, the sound); it featured renowned dramatic personalities, such as Sarah Bernhardt.

film gauge The width of film stock, measured in millimeters (mm): standard commercial film is 35mm, although 16mm is becoming more common; 70mm film produced from 65mm negative stock was once the standard gauge for epic productions; Super 8mm is still basically the province of amateurs; and 8mm is now obsolete.

film noir Literally, "black film." A French term for a film set in a sordid urban atmosphere that deals with dark passions and violent crimes. Many American thrillers of the late 1940s and the late 1980s were of this type.

film plane The front surface of the film as it lies in the camera or projector gate (i.e., the film aperture).

film stock The basic material of film, made of cellulose triacetate and coated with photographic emulsions.

filmography A list of films, including directors and dates; similar to what a bibliography is to books.

filter A plate of glass, plastic, or gelatin that alters the quality of light passing through a lens.

final cut A film in its completed form. See **rough cut.**

first run The distribution of a new film to a limited number of showcase theaters. On its second and subsequent runs, the film is usually distributed to a

large number of theaters in less exclusive locations. This formula of slow release is known as *platform booking*. See **saturation booking.**

fish-eye lens A radically distorting wide-angle lens with an angle of view that approaches 180 degrees. See **wide-angle lens.**

flash forward Like flashback, a shot, scene, or sequence outside the narrative present but projected into the narrative future.

flashback A shot, scene, sequence, or sometimes, a major part of a film inserted into the narrative present to recapitulate the narrative past.

"flocking" software An animation software that helps simulate the motion of a large number of creatures in herding or schooling patterns by controlling each individual movement, or animal in a group, in relation to others.

Flow-Mo See **"bullet-time" photography.**

fluid dynamic simulator An animation software that renders volume in the representation of fluid turbulence.

focal length The distance in millimeters from the optical center of the lens (a point midway between the front and rear elements) to the emulsion surface of the film stock when the lens is sharply focused on "infinity"—that is, an extremely distant object. Short lenses are called wide-angle lenses, and long lenses are called telephoto lenses.

focus The clarity and sharpness of an image, limited to a certain range of distance from the camera. See **deep focus** and **shallow focus.**

focus plane The plane at which the lens forms an image when focused on a given scene, measured as the distance from the film plane. See **depth of field.**

Foley effects Named after Universal Pictures film editor Jack Foley, who created live sound effects produced by performers known as "Foley artists" (also known as "Foley walkers" because the most common sound effect is footsteps). Foley artists are often trained dancers because they have a good sense of timing. Foley built the first studio for such effects in the 1950s.

formalism The elevation of form over content. Formalism posits that meaning is a function of the strictly formal features of a discourse and not the content or the referent of the content.

formalist An investment in form above content in any given medium. Sometimes used perjoratively in a Marxist context (see Chapters 5 and 17).

frame The smallest compositional unit of film structure, it is the individual photographic image, both in projection and on the film strip. The term also designates the boundaries of the image as an anchor for composition.

Free Cinema An important documentary-style film movement in Britain started by Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, and Tony Richardson in the mid-1950s.

freeze frame A shot that replicates a still photograph. The effect is achieved by printing a single frame many times in succession.

front projection While live action is filmed against a reflective backdrop, another image is projected on the backdrop by means of mirrors lying along the same axis as the camera lens. The lighting and the reflective backdrop prevent shadows. See **rear projection.**

***f*-stop** The setting on a lens that indicates the diameter of the aperture (e.g., *f*-1, *f*-1.4, *f*-2, *f*-2.8, *f*-4, *f*-5.6, *f*-8, *f*-11, *f*-16, *f*-22, *f*-32, *f*-45, and *f*-64). The size of the aperture determines how much light the lens will transmit to the emulsion surface of the film and therefore determines the visual quality of the image imprinted on the negative stock. The larger the *f*-number, the smaller the aperture and greater the depth of field. See **diaphragm** and **lens aperature.**

full shot A shot that includes the subject's entire body and often a three-fourths view of the set. A type of medium long shot. See **long shot.**

Futurism A revolutionary movement in the arts closely allied with Constructivism that glorified power, speed, technology, and the machine age at the expense of more traditional cultural forms. It had a natural affinity for the cinema and its mechanized apparatus.

gaffer The chief electrician and supervisor of all lighting on a set.

gendai-geki One of two major Japanese film genres; films about the stories of contemporary life. A popular subtype is the *shomin-geki*, or comedy of middle-class and lower-middle-class family life. See ***jidai-geki.***

genre A category used to classify a film (or any other artistic production) in terms of certain general patterns of form and content, such as Western, horror, or gangster film.

glass shot A special-effects technique in which sections of a scene are painted on a glass plate, which is then mounted in front of the camera for integration with live action.

Go-Motion system An animation technique developed by Phil Tippett, which uses computer-controlled rods to move puppets or objects during filmmaking. Unlike stop-motion animation, Go-Motion achieves motion blur because the model is moving during the exposure of each frame.

grip The person who rigs up equipment such as lights and props on a film set and makes certain they function properly.

gross The total amount of money a film makes in rental and ticket receipts before deducting costs. The word is also used as a verb.

hair-simulation software An animation software that allows animators to render realistic-looking hair digitally.

handheld shot A type of shot made possible by portable, single-operator cameras. See **Arriflex.**

high-contrast A term used to describe color film stock that produces sharply distinguished hues.

high-key lighting A lighting setup in which the key light is particularly bright.

highlighting The use of extremely concentrated or fine light beams to accentuate certain parts of the subject.

holography A modern photographic technique that uses laser beams to replicate three-dimensionality.

image map Two-dimensional images (e.g., painted images, photographs, or patterns) used in computer-animation processes, such as texture mapping or tilting.

intercutting See **crosscutting**.

internegatives The negative duplicates used to make release prints, to protect the original negative from damage and wear.

interpositives Short for intermediate positives. Positive prints created from original negatives and used to make internegatives.

intertitles Printed titles that appear within the main body of a film to convey dialogue and other narrative information. Intertitles were common in, but not essential to, the silent cinema.

inverse kinematics A computer-animation technique for easily simulating character movement. This approach links one body movement to another in a chainlike manner, wherein one joint follows the movement of the joint below it. Thus, when an animated character's foot is moved forward to simulate a step, the leg moves accordingly, the hip shifts, the spine alters position, and the head and the arms assume the pose of a walking character. See **animation "chains."**

iris shot A shot in which a circular, lens-masking device contracts (to isolate) or expands (to reveal) an area of the frame for symbolic or narrative visual effect.

jidai-geki One of two major Japanese film genres; period films set before the Meiji Restoration of 1868. All samurai films are *jidai-geki*. See ***gendai-geki.***

jump cut A cut that is made in the midst of a continuous shot, or a mismatched cut between shots (the opposite of a match cut's apparent seamlessness). Jump cuts create discontinuity in filmic time and space, and draw attention to the medium itself, as opposed to its content.

key light The main light on a set, normally placed at a 45-degree angle to the camera-subject axis and mixed in a contrast ratio with fill light, depending on the desired effect. See **fill light.**

key lighting In high-key lighting, the scene is almost entirely lit by the key light; in low-key lighting, little of the scene's illumination is provided by the key light.

Kinetograph The first viable motion-picture camera invented in 1889 by W. K. L. Dickson for the Thomas Edison Laboratories. See **Cinématographe** and **Kinetoscope.**

Kinetophone Edison's unsychronized sound-film system; it was never successfully marketed.

Kinetoscope Invented before the projector, this was Edison's peep-show device in which short, primitive moving pictures could be seen.

kino-glaz Literally, "cinema-eye." Conceived by Dziga Vertov in the 1920s, it is an early *cinéma vérité* approach to film aesthetics and best typified by his film *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929).

lap dissolve See **dissolve**.

laser Acronym for Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation. Developed in 1960, lasers project concentrated beams of light whose different rays are coherent. Owing to its peculiar properties, laser light is a central factor in holography.

laser scanning The use of a laser recorder to scan film images into digital images, computer-generated images onto film stock, or models into three-dimensional computer graphics.

latent images The invisible images that are created when light hits the emulsion on photographic film or paper. The latent images become visible during the developing process.

Latham loop A set of sprockets that looped the film to keep it from breaking as a result of its own inertia in early projection systems.

lens The optical device used in cameras and projectors to focus light rays by refraction.

lens aperture The irislike diaphragm at the optical center of the lens, a point midway between the front and rear elements. Varying the diamenter of this opening, measured in *f*-stops, determines the amount of light the lens will transmit to the emulsion surface of the film. See **diaphragm** and ***f*-stop.**

lighting cameraman The British term for cinematographer.

linkage V. I. Pudovkin's description of montage, to which Sergei Eisenstein took exception.

location shooting Any shooting not done inside a studio or on the studio's back lots.

long shot A shot that generally includes the whole figure of its subjects and a good deal of background. See **extreme long shot** and **medium long shot.**

long take A single unbroken shot, moving or stationary, showing a complex action that might otherwise be represented through montage. It is essential to mise-en-scène aesthetics. See **sequence shot.**

low-grain A type of film stock that exhibits very little film grain (the silver-halide crystals that capture the image when exposed to light) when projected. Low-grain stock aids in producing crisp, clear, high-contrast images.

low-grain, high-contrast See **low-grain**.

maquettes The small-scale practical models used to visualize the three-dimensional shape of animatronic puppets or scanned into a computer to create wireframes. Maquettes can also simply serve as an artist's reference when rendering a CGI object.

mask A covering of some type placed before the camera lens to block off part of the photographed image. Also refers to an aperture plate inserted behind a projector lens to obtain a desired aspect ratio. See **matte shot.**

master shot A shot, usually long or full, that establishes the spatial relationships among characters and objects within a dramatic scene before it is broken into closer, more discrete shots through editing. See **full shot** and **long shot.**

match cut A cut in which two different shots are linked together by visual and/or aural continuity. See **associative editing.**

match moving The process by which computer-generated camera movements and settings are correctly integrated into live-action photography.

matte shot A shot that is partially opaque in the frame area so that it can be printed together with another frame, masking unwanted content and allowing for the addition of another scene on a reverse matte. In a traveling matte shot, the contours of the opaque areas can be varied from frame to frame. See **bluescreen photography.**

Mattes See **matte shot.**

medium close-up A shot distanced midway between a close-up and a medium shot (e.g., a subject's face and torso from the chest up).

medium long shot Also-called *plan américain*. A shot distanced between a medium and a long shot, usually showing a subject's entire figure (full shot) or three-fourths of it from the knees up.

medium shot A shot distanced midway between a close-up and a full shot (e.g., a human subject from the waist up).

microphone A piece of electronic equipment that picks up sound waves and converts them into electrical signals for amplification.

microphotography Also called *photomicrography*. Photographing or filming done through a microscope.

minimal cinema A particularly stark, simplified kind of realism involving as little narrative manipulation as possible; associated with the films of Carl Theodor Dreyer, Robert Bresson, and, more recently, Jean-Marie Straub.

mirror shot A shot taken in a mirror or a type of glass.

mise-en-scène Literally, "putting in the scene." A term that describes the action, lighting, decor, and other elements within the shot itself, as opposed to the effects created by cutting. Realists generally prefer the process of mise-en-scène to the more manipulative techniques of montage.

Mitchell camera The standard Hollywood studio camera of the 1930s through the 1950s, and still heavily used today. It was introduced in 1921 to compete with the Bell & Howell 2709, which was the industry standard from about 1920 until the introduction of sound. According to David Samuelson in *"Hands-On" Manual for Cinematographers* (Oxford: Focal Press, 1994), the Mitchell workhorse models NC, BNC, and BNCR will "never wear out." (pp. 4–13)

mix Optically, a dissolve; aurally, the combination of several different sound tracks, such as dialogue and music.

mixing The work of the general sound editor, who refines, balances, and combines different sound tracks.

model shot A shot that uses miniatures instead of real locations, especially useful in disaster or science-fiction films.

modeling The process of digitally creating three-dimensional objects, environments, and scenes in computer graphics.

mogul Originally, "powerful conqueror." Today, it refers to the heads of the Hollywood studios in their heyday.

monogatari Japanese for "story" or "narrative." The word appears in many Japanese film titles.

montage From the French verb *monter*, meaning "to assemble"; its simplest meaning is "cutting." Sergei Eisenstein developed an elaborate theory of montage based on the idea that contiguous shots relate to each other in a way that generates concepts not materially present in the content of the shots themselves. The term can also refer to the presentation of a great deal of narrative information through editing in a short period of time. See **accelerated montage** and **parallel action.**

morphing The digital-effects process whereby one image is gradually transformed into another.

motion blur The blurred visual effect that occurs when the object being recorded is moving faster than the shutter speed of the camera. To accurately re-create the perceptual appearance of high-speed motion, this effect must be added to computer graphics using three-dimensional motion-blur simulation software during rendering or two-dimensional motion-blur simulation software after the image is rendered.

motion capture The process whereby the precise movements of a moving object (or an actor) are recorded, then converted into digital information that can be used to construct and animate wireframe skeletons. There are three types of motion-capture systems: *magnetic*, which tracks variations in a moving object's magnetic field via transmitters whose signals are then used to calculate the position of the object in space; *optical*, which relies on finding markers embedded at key points on the object with one or more video cameras; and *mechanical*, which uses linkages such as potentiometers to measure the relative position of the object in movement.

motivated point of view A continuity-editing trope achieved through shot-reverse-shot and the eyeline match; initially associated with the work of G. W. Pabst.

muscle-enveloping software Developed by Industrial Light & Magic, an animation software that allows animators to make computer-generated muscles to move realistically with a creature's skeletal system.

narrative A story with a beginning, a middle, and an end—though, to paraphrase Godard, not necessarily in that order.

narrative film A film whose structure follows a story line of some sort. The mainstream of film history from the medium's birth through the present has been narrative.

naturalism A concept in literature and film that assumes the lives of the characters are biologically, sociologically, or psychologically determined. Von Stroheim's *Greed* (1924) is a classic example of naturalism in film, whereas Frank Norris's *McTeague* (1899), the novel on which the film is based, is a classic example of naturalism in fiction.

naturalist See **naturalism.**

negative The film that inversely records the light and dark areas of a photographed scene. Positive prints are produced from negatives.

negative cost The cost of producing a film, exclusive of advertising, studio overhead, and distribution prints.

neorealism A post–World War II movement in filmmaking associated primarily with the films of Roberto Rossellini, Luchino Visconti, and Vittorio De Sica in Italy, and characterized by leftist political sympathies, location shooting, and the use of nonprofessional actors.

neue Kino, das Literally, "the new cinema." Cinema of West Germany after 1966.

newsreel The filmed news reports shown along with the main feature in American theaters in the 1930s through the 1950s; later eclipsed by television news.

New Wave (or *nouvelle vague*) Originally a group of French filmmakers who, in the 1950s, started their careers as critics for *Cahiers du cinéma*. The year 1959 can be said to mark the beginning of this movement, because it was the release date of François Truffaut's *Les quatre cents coups*, Jean-Luc Godard's *À bout de souffle*, and Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima, mon amour*. Also used to describe any new group of directors in any country whose approach to filmmaking is radically different from that of the established tradition, as in the Czech New Wave.

nickelodeon The first permanent movie theaters, converted from storefronts; the term derives from *nickel* (the price of admission) and *odeon* (Greek for "theater").

Office of Strategic Services (OSS) A United States intelligence service created during World War II that became the model for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

offscreen space The implied filmic space beyond the borders of the film frame at any given moment in projection. In conventional modes of representation (e.g., classical Hollywood narrative), offscreen space is treated as "dead," giving the borders the status of a compositional framing device, beyond which filmic reality ceases to exist. Anti-traditional modes of representation (e.g., films of Ozu or contemporary materialist cinema) attempt to suggest the continuity of offscreen and on-screen space, giving the borders the status of a window frame, beyond which there is more filmic reality. Offscreen space can also be created in front of the screen, as well as beyond its borders, if the camera traverses the 180-degree axis of action established by traditional practice and shoots what is, in effect, behind it. See **180-degree system.**

optical effects The effects created using special cameras, optical printers, animation, rotoscoping, or motion-control devices that cannot be done in front of the camera. Unlike digital effects, all optical effects involve some manipulation of the photographic process itself. See **digital effects.**

optical printer The machine that performs many postproduction optical processes, such as dissolves, color balancing, and some special effects. Film prints are duplicated in a special type of optical printer called a contact printer.

orthochromatic stock A black-and-white film stock that reacts particularly to the blue and green areas of the color spectrum, rather than to the red; widely replaced by panchromatic stock after 1926, but still used today for special applications.

outtake A take that is not included in the final print of the film.

pan Any pivotal movement of the camera around an imaginary vertical axis running through it; the term derives from "panorama." See **roll, swish pan,** and **tilt shot.**

panning shots See **pan**.

Panavision The anamorphic process most commonly used today; it replaced CinemaScope in the early 1960s. Super Panavision (originally called Panavision 70) uses 70mm film stock to produce a 65mm negative without squeezing the image. Ultra Panavision produces a 65mm negative anamorphically compressed in filming by a ratio of 1.25:1. The process now referred to as Panavision 70 is an optical printing method that allows 70mm release prints to be blown up from 35mm negatives, either anamorphic or spherical. Also, Panavision is the trade name of a widely used camera based on the design of the Mitchell camera.

panchromatic stock A black-and-white film stock that is sensitive to all the colors of the spectrum (from red to blue), but is less capable of achieving great depth of field than the orthochromatic stock it replaced in 1927. The introduction of widescreen processes in the 1950s greatly enhanced panchromatic depth of field.

parallel action A narrative strategy that crosscuts between two or more separate actions to create the illusion that they are occurring simultaneously. See **accelerated montage** and **montage**.

particle-animation software An animation software that generates automated instructions for reproducing the natural, random movement of large numbers of objects that cannot be animated individually in a cost-effective way. First used to simulate submarine wakes, torpedo trails, and floating plankton in John McTiernan's *The Hunt for Red October* (1990), it is often utilized to create smoke, fire, flocks of birds, tornadoes, and other types of natural phenomena.

persistence of vision The physiological foundation of cinema: an image remains on the retina of the eye for a short period of time after it disappears from the

actual field of vision. Thus, when a successive image replaces it immediately, as on a moving strip of film, the illusion of continuous motion is produced.

phi phenomenon First described scientifically by the Gestalt psychologist Max Wertheimer in 1912, this is the phenomenon that causes us to see the individual blades of a rotating fan as a unitary circular form or the different hues of a spinning color wheel as a single, homogenous color. Together with persistence of vision, the phi phenomenon allows us to see a succession of static images as a single unbroken movement and permits the illusion of continuous motion on which cinematography is based.

photomicrography See **microphotography.**

photorealistic Anything resembling photography in its attention to precise visual detail.

pin blocking The process of aligning and interlocking all the elements of a digitally composited shot so that the director can move his or her camera without having to compensate for computer graphics.

pixillation A technique used for animating models by photographing them one frame at a time, such as in *King Kong* (1933). The technique can also be applied so that the illusion of continuous motion is disrupted. This effect is achieved either by stop-motion photography or by culling out particular frames from the negative of the film stock, such as in the work of Canadian filmmaker Norman McLaren (1914–1987). See **animation** and **stop-motion photography.**

platform booking See **first run.**

politique des auteurs Literally, "authors' policy." The idea that a single person, most often the director, has the sole aesthetic responsibility for a film's form and content. François Truffaut first postulated the idea in his article "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français," which appeared in the January 1954 issue of *Cahiers du cinéma*. Other prominent exponents of this theory of film have been André Bazin in France and Andrew Sarris in the United States.

polygons The planar surfaces composed of at least three edges and three points; they are the basic building blocks of the complicated wireframes used to create computer graphic images.

positive A print in which the light values of the film correspond to those of the scene recorded; produced from a negative.

postsynchronization Also called *dubbing*. Synchronization of sound and image after the film has been shot—an important step forward in the liberation of the early sound-film camera from its glass-paneled booth.

previsualization Any method that aids the filmmaker in configuring how a scene will look before it is shot. In modern special-effects filmmaking, previsualization, in the form of animatics, is regularly used during preproduction to plan intricate special-effects sequences.

procedural animation A computer-animation technique that generates motion through an algorithm or rule-based computer language. Forms of procedural animation, such as particle animation, simulate the processes of natural growth and movement (including elements of randomness, recursion, and accident) and are used to re-create natural phenomena, such as plant growth, tornadoes, and tidal waves.

procedural description See **procedural animation**.

process shot See **special effects**.

rack focus A shallow-focus technique that forcibly directs the vision of the spectator from one subject to another. The focus is pulled and changed to shift the focus plane. See **shallow focus.**

randomization software A software application used to add irregularities to otherwise uniform computer-generated arrangements, such as to vary the motion within particle animation.

ratings A system of film classification based on the amount of violence, sex, or "adult" language in a film. The British Board of Censors has three categories: U (universal), A (adult), and X (prohibited to children). The Motion Picture Association of America has five categories: G (general), PG (parental guidance suggested), PG-13 (parental guidance for children under thirteen), R (restricted to persons under seventeen unless accompanied by an adult), and NC-17 (prohibited to persons under seventeen).

reaction shot A shot that cuts away from the central action to show a character's reaction to it.

real time The actual time it would take for an event to occur in reality, outside of filmic time. In the works of modernist directors such as Michelangelo Antonioni and Miklós Jancsó, real time and filmic time often coincide for long sequences, although not usually during the entire length of the film. In rare instances, however, real time and filmic time coincide precisely, such as in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948), Robert Wise's *The Set-Up* (1949), Agnès Varda's *Cléo from 5 to* 7 (1962), and Sebastian Schipper's *Victoria* (2015).

realism A type of filmmaking in which fidelity to the nature of the subject itself is more important than the director's attitude toward it. As opposed to Expressionism, there is usually a minimal montage and special effects. See **formalism, minimal cinema,** and **neorealism.**

rear projection A technique in which a scene is projected onto a translucent screen located behind the actors so that it appears as though they are in a specific location. See **front projection.**

reel The casing and holder for the film strip or tape. The feed reel supplies the film, and the take-up reel rewinds it. A 35mm reel holds up to 1,000 feet, and a 16mm reel, up to 400 feet. At sound speed (24 frames per second), a full 35mm reel runs about 10 minutes; at silent speed (approximately 16 frames per second), between 14 and 16 minutes.

release print The final print used for screening and distribution.

rendering The process by which photorealistic features (e.g., shading, color, texture, etc.) are digitally added to three-dimensional wireframe skeletons.

resolution The ability of a camera lens to define images in sharp detail. See **definition.**

reverse-angle shot A shot taken at a 180-degree angle from the preceding shot. In practice, it is rarely used; instead, filmmakers have adopted shot-reverse-shot editing in which the angle separating the two perspectives is usually between 120 and 160 degrees. Two-party dialogue sequences are usually constructed through shot-reverse-shot editing in a manner the French call "*champ-contra-champ*" ("[visual] field-against-field"). See **eyeline match** and **shot-reverse-shot.**

reverse motion Shooting a subject so that the action runs backward. It is achieved by turning the camera upside down (so long as the film is double-sprocketed), then turning the processed film end over end, or by running it backward through an optical printer.

roll The rotation of the camera around an imaginary axis that runs through the lens to the subject, called the "lens axis." See **pan.**

rom com Media industry jargon for "romantic comedy."

rotoscoping The technique of isolating an object frame by frame by tracing around its edges to create a silhouette, which can then be replaced by another image during postproduction.

rough cut The first completed version of a film prepared by the editor. General polishing and the finer points of timing and continuity are accomplished later. See **final cut.**

rushes Also called *dailies*. The sound and image prints of each day's shooting, rapidly processed overnight so that filmmakers can evaluate the previous day's work before shooting begins again in the morning.

Sabre system Developed by Industrial Light & Magic, a highly flexible "open architecture" digital-effects system that can accept a wide range of software and perform many different compositing functions, from digital matte painting through editing and image processing.

saturation booking A pattern of release whereby a film opens on multiple screens (sometimes as many as 2,000 or 3,000) on a single weekend. See **first run.**

scenario A part or the whole of a screenplay.

scene A vague term that describes a unit of narration. In film, it may consist of a series of shots or a single sequence that was shot in one location. See **sequence** or **shot.**

Schüfftan process Invented by the UFA cinematographer Eugen Schüfftan (later Eugene Schuftan), a process-photography technique that combines mirror and model shots to create a composite image; first used on a large scale by Fritz Lang to create the futuristic vistas of *Metropolis* (1926).

Scope An abbreviation for CinemaScope or any other anamorphic process.

score The musical sound track for a film. The word is also used as a verb.

screen As a noun, the specially treated surface on which a film is projected; as a verb, the act of projecting or watching a film.

screenplay The script of a film. It may be no more than a rough outline that the director fills in or detailed, as were most Hollywood studio scripts of the 1930s and the 1940s, complete with dialogue, continuity, and camera movements.

screwball comedy A type of comedy characterized by frantic action and a great deal of verbal wit that were popular in American films of the 1930s and the early 1940s. The focal point of the plot is usually a couple in a bizarre predicament, such as in Frank Capra's *It Happened One Night* (1934) and Howard Hawks's *Bringing Up Baby* (1938).

second unit A supplementary film crew that photographs routine scenes not shot by the first unit

in an elaborate production; background and establishing shots, for instance, are usually shot by the second unit.

segment shooting A Hong Kong shooting style in which action is choreographed and shot progressively rather than built up from "coverage," as in the Hollywood "master shot/coverage" practice.

sequence A unit of film structure made up of one or more scenes or shots that combine to form a larger unit.

sequence shot Sometimes called by the French term *plan-séquence*. A long take that usually requires sophisticated camera movement. See **long take.**

set The location where a scene is shot, often constructed on a soundstage.

setup The position of the camera, lights, sound equipment, actors, and so on, for any given shot. The number of different setups that a film requires can be an important economic factor.

shading software A software application that aids in the realistic rendering of computer graphics by taking into account the surface characteristics of the object being rendered, as well as the number, intensity, and location of light sources in the scene, and then tinting the image accordingly.

shallow focus A technique that deliberately uses a shallow depth of field to direct the viewer's perception along a shallow focus plane. See **deep focus** and **rack focus.**

short A film whose running time is less than thirty minutes. See **feature.**

shot A continuously exposed, unedited piece of film of any length—the basic signifying unit of film structure. The average shot length (ASL) and the number of shots vary with every film.

shot-reverse-shot Cutting back and forth between eyelines as two characters look offscreen at each other, creating an illusion of spatial contiguity. It would become the most pervasive shot in the classical Hollywood cinema of the 1930s and the 1940s. See **eyeline match** and **reverse-angle-shot.**

shutter The mechanism that opens and closes to admit and obstruct light from individual film frame as it is moved into position for exposure in the camera and projection in the projector.

silver halide The individual crystals on film stock that capture the image when exposed to light.

silver retention The color-film developing techniques that retain or redevelop silver halide on the negative, increasing contrast and grain, desaturating the color, and producing blacker blacks in the print image.

slapstick A type of comedy that relies on acrobatic physical gags and exaggerated pantomine rather than on verbal humor; it was, obviously, the dominant comic form during the silent era.

slow motion When the camera is overcranked to film action at a speed faster than 24 frames per second, the action appears much slower on-screen than it would in reality when projected at normal speed. See **undercrank.**

socialist realism The aesthetic doctrine promulgated in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s and continuing with varying emphases through the 1980s that insisted all art be rendered intelligible to the masses and subserve the purposes of the state. It had little to do with either socialism or realism.

soft focus The softening or blurring the definition of a subject by means of lens filters, special lenses, or even petroleum jelly smeared directly on normal lens, producing a dreamy or romantic effect (and often, making the actor appear younger).

sound effects All sounds that are neither dialogue nor music.

sound track There are two basic types of analog sound track in use today: *optical* encodes information on a photographic light band that widens, narrows, or varies in density on the edge of the film strip; and *magnetic* encodes information electromagnetically on specially treated surfaces. During the 1990s, three different types of digital sound track were introduced: Dolby Digital, which stores data between the perforations on one side of the film strip; Sony Dynamic Digital Sound (SDDS), which stores data on both outer edges of the film strip; and Digital Theater Systems (DTS), which stores data on separate compact discs synchronized by a time code on the film strip that runs to the right of the analog sound track and to the left of the frame.

soundstage A specially designed soundproof building in which sets are constructed for filming.

special effects A term that describes a range of synthetic processes used to enhance or manipulate the filmic image. They include optical effects (e.g., front projection, model shots, rear projection, etc.); mechanical or physical effects (e.g., explosions, fires,

fog, flying and falling objects or people, etc.); makeup effects (e.g., animatronics, the use of blood bags and prosthetics, etc.); and digital effects.

split screen Two or more images contained within a single frame that do not overlap. Abel Gance used the technique extensively in *Napoleon as Seen by Abel Gance* (1927), as did Michael Wadleigh in *Woodstock* (1970).

sprockets The evenly spaced holes on the edge of the film strip that allow the strip to be moved forward mechanically. Also, the wheeled gears that engage these holes in the camera and the projector.

stereophonic sound The use of two or more high-fidelity speakers and sound tracks to approximate the actual dimensionality of hearing with both ears.

still A photograph that re-creates a scene from a film for publicity purposes, or a single-frame enlargement from a film that looks like a photograph.

stock footage A film borrowed from a collection or a library that consists of standard, often-used shots, such as of World War II combat or street crowds in New York City.

stop-motion photography A technique used for trick photography and special effects in which one frame is exposed at a time so that the subject can be adjusted between frames; reputedly discovered by Georges Méliès. See **animation** and **pixillation.**

subjective camera A technique that causes the viewer to observe events in the film from the perspective of a character, either empirically or psychologically.

subtitle A printed title superimposed over the images, usually at the bottom of the frame, to translate foreign dialogue, provide dialogue for the hearing-impaired, and so on.

surrealism A movement in painting, film, and literature that aims to depict the workings of the subconscious by combining incongruous imagery or presenting a situation in dreamlike, irrational terms. More generally, surrealism may suggest any fantastic style of representation.

swish pan A pan that moves from one scene to another so quickly that the intervening content is blurred.

synchronization Also known as "sync." The use of mechanical or electronic timing devices to keep sound and image in precise relationship to each other.

synchronous sound Sound whose source is made clear by the image track. See **asynchronous sound** or **contrapuntal sound.**

tableau A vivid representation of a group of people, as on a stage or in a painting; it is derived from the French *tableau*, meaning "table."

take A director shoots one or more takes of each shot in a given setup, only one of which appears in the final version of the film.

technical director (TD) The person responsible for the direction of the technical components of a digital-effects shot, including models, animation, match moving, and rotoscoping.

telecine A device used to rapidly convert film into a video format.

telephoto lens A lens with a long focal length that functions like a telescope to magnify distant objects. Because its angle of view is very narrow, it flattens the depth perspective. See **wide-angle lens.**

television A system for the broadcast transmission of moving images and sound to home receivers. It was invented in the 1930s but was not available for mass marketing until after World War II. Since that time, television has usurped the cinema as America's dominant mass medium of audiovisual communication, to the point that Hollywood is kept alive today less by theatrical filmmaking than by the production of telefilm. The word *television* derives from the Greek for "seeing at a distance."

texture mapping The process by which a 2-D image is applied to a 3-D image (similar to gift-wrapping a box).

theatrical distribution The distribution of films through normal commercial agencies and theaters.

theatrical film A film made primarily for viewing in a motion-picture theater, rather than for television or other specialized delivery system.

Third World cinema A type of militant cinema produced in the countries of Latin America, Africa, and Asia; it is generally Marxist in ideology.

three-dimensional computer animation The creation of three-dimensional figures in the computer.

tiling The technique of creating patterns by procedurally repeating a single image, such as a digital photograph, multiple times in computer animation (similar to creating a tiled ceramic surface). For example, to generate the sweeping views of the Germanic forces in *Gladiator* (Ridley Scott, 2000), digital-effects animators tiled together still photographic plates of a limited number of costumed extras representing just a small fraction of the actual numbers involved.

tilt shot A shot made by turning the camera up and down so that it rotates on an axis running horizontally through the camera head. See **pan** and **roll.**

time-lapse photography A kind of extreme fast-motion shooting that compresses real time by photographing a subject at a rate of, for example, one frame every thirty seconds; used primarily as a scientific tool to photograph natural phenomena that occur too slowly for normal observation. The opposite would be to rapidly expose film to capture movement that occurs too quickly to be seen by the naked eye, a kind of extreme slow-motion shooting.

track A single recording channel on a sound track that can be mixed with others and modified to create a variety of effects.

tracking shot Also known as *traveling shot*. A single continuous shot made on the ground with a moving camera; aerial and crane shots are also continuous.

traveling shot See **tracking shot.**

tungsten incandescent light The main source of "soft" or low-intensity illumination on the movie set. It was the principal source of film lighting during the early sound period, owing to its relative silence. Like household lighting, it is produced within a bulb when a tungsten filament is made incandescent by electric current. In contemporary incandescent film lighting, ordinary glass bulbs have been replaced by quartz halogen globes.

two-reeler A film running about thirty minutes; the standard length of silent comedies.

typage A method of casting actors used by Eisenstein; instead of professionals with individual characteristics, Eisenstein sought "types" and representative characters.

undercrank When the camera is run at a speed less than 24 frames per second then projected at normal speed, the action appears in fast motion. See **slow motion.**

VCR Abbreviation for "videocassette recorder" or "videocassette recording." See **videocassette.**

VHS Abbreviation for "video home system." Any video system or combination of systems designed for home use, including VCRs, videodisc players, video games, and home computers with video display. More specifically, VHS is the technical designation for a popular ½-inch videotape format (made by RCA, Panasonic, JVC, etc.) that competed on the consumer market with the Beta format (made by Sony, Zenith, Toshiba, etc.) until it won the day in the mid-1980s. After that, only Sony, which invented the Beta format, continued to manufacture Beta equipment, halting production in 2002. Many video professionals consider Beta to be technologically superior to VHS.

videocassette A sealed two-reel system of ¾-inch or ½-inch videotape, generally used for private recording and viewing. See **VCR.**

videodisc A system for home-video playback of prerecorded discs. Audiovisual information is encoded on plastic discs by a laser beam and decoded by a corresponding laser beam on the playback unit.

videotape A magnetic tape for recording video images and sound; manufactured in 2-inch (professional), ¾-inch, ½-inch, and 8mm ¼-inch (amateur) formats.

virtual camera Implied in all three-dimensional computer animation, the virtual camera's "lens" is the point toward which all the lines of perspective in the computer-generated image converge. Like real cameras, virtual cameras can track, pan, tilt, and zoom, yet with more freedom of placement.

VistaVision A non-anamorphic widescreen process developed by Paramount to compete with Fox's CinemaScope in 1954. It ran 35mm film stock through the camera horizontally, rather than vertically, to produce a double-frame image twice as wide as the conventional 35mm frame. The positive print could be projected horizontally with special equipment to cast a huge image on the screen, or it could be reduced anamorphically for standard vertical 35mm projection. Because the process is very expensive, since 1961, it has been used only for special effects.

visual-effects (VFX) supervisor The person in charge of the technical and creative aspects of special-effects production, including computer-generated imaging, bluescreen or greenscreen photography, and the use of miniatures.

voice-over A voice track laid over the other tracks in a film's sound mix to comment on or narrate the action on-screen.

VTR Abbreviation for "videotape recorder" or "videotape recording," reel-to-reel or cassette.

water-simulation software An animation software pioneered by Cinesite for *Waterworld* (Kevin Reynolds, 1995) that allows animators to simulate water digitally, complete with realistic details that include foam, crests, splashes, and color changes.

wide-angle lens A lens whose broad angle of view increases the illusion of depth but distorts the linear dimensions of the image. See **fish-eye lens** and **telephoto lens.**

widescreen A term reserved to describe any flat (i.e., nonprocessed) film format with an aspect ratio of 1.66:1 (European standard) or 1.85:1 (American standard). Also may refer broadly to any format that yields a screen image wider than the Academy ratio of 1.33:1, whether processed or not. Most widescreen processes are anamorphic, but some employ wide-gauge film (Panavision 70, Todd-AO) or multiple camera processes (Cinerama).

wild recording The recording of sound independent of the visuals, usually to be used later as sound effects.

wild shooting The shooting of a film without simultaneously recording the sound track.

wild sound See **wild recording**.

wipe An optical process whereby one image appears to wipe the preceding image off the screen; a common transitional device in the 1930s. See **dissolve** and **fade-out.**

wireframes The line-based polygonal drawings—created from scratch or by using scanned physical structures as a guide—that provide the foundation for all three-dimensional computer animation. They have no surface details, so are given photorealistic features during rendering.

wire removal The use of digital painting or compositing techniques to eliminate cables, rigs, or harnesses that were used to execute stunts or special effects during filmmaking.

zoom lens A variable-focus lens—one capable of focal lengths ranging from wide-angle to telephoto—often used to create optical motion without tracking the camera. Also used to describe a shot made with such a lens.

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